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**THE RESEARCH 'GAME':  
A Sociological Study of Academic  
Research Work in Two Universities**

**By**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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March 2001

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CAT	College of Advanced Technology
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
DES	Department of Education and Science
DevR	Development Research
GCU	Golden County University
GR	Generic (basic) Research
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information
NAB	National Advisory Board
NFF	Non-Formula Funding
QR	Quality Research
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RCU	Royal County University
SCI	Science Citations Index
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
TQA	Teaching Quality Assessment
UFC	Universities Funding Council
UGC	Universities Grants Committee
UOA	Unit of Assessment

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would firstly like to thank Professor Bob Burgess whose breadth of knowledge of the higher education 'field' was invaluable to this research. He showed immense patience in his role as supervisor and his firm and steady guidance ensured that this thesis would reach completion. My gratitude is also extended to Sally Hurman who arranged countless meetings, phonecalls and delivery of chapters between Professor Burgess and myself.

I am also indebted to Professor Jim Beckford who became my mentor at the University of Warwick in the latter part of my studies. His meticulous attention to detail ensured this thesis contained less grammatical errors than would otherwise have been the case. He provided searching questions and ideas that were borne of a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the subject under study.

The bearers of endless emotional as well as intellectual support, my friends and colleagues at the University of Warwick are also due my heartfelt thanks. These include Ana Dinerstein, Antonio Famiglietti, Leonie Howe, Dr Annette Robertson, Dr Mike Neary and Professor Simon Clarke. This eternal debt is also extended to all my friends and family but most importantly my mother, Margaret Anderson, who along with everyone else will be extremely happy that this thesis has reached a kind of ending.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Biologists, Sociologists and 'English people' who made this study possible. One head of department asked me why he should allow me to use up so much of the precious time of academics in his department. I had no real answer for him despite the possibility of invoking many arguments around the necessity of gaining a greater understanding of the academic world. For there is no reason why anyone should give up their time or indeed 'give up themselves', as subjects, to any sociological project. But I am grateful to the inspirational academics who did give up their time and I hope that this thesis reflects in part the worth of that generosity.

This research was supported by an ESRC studentship, award number R0042962495

## ABSTRACT

One of the most important changes to UK higher education in the last ten years has been the funding of research within universities and particularly the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). This thesis is concerned with the organisation of research work within universities and possible impacts of this change in government policy on the research activities within university departments.

Much of the recent literature on academics has documented their declining status and persistent undervaluing (Halsey, 1995). The decrease in government funding to higher education and the increase in processes of accountability and assessment are argued to weaken academic autonomy and further the 'proletarianisation' of academic work. Further research, however, has raised the question of whether academics are quite so passive in their response to policy changes. Trowler (1998) argues that academics are active agents in their implementation of policy within institutional settings.

This thesis investigates the disciplinary and institutional structural processes that govern academic work and analyses in detail the inter-relationship of these structures with the practices of academics. Bourdieu's framework for the analysis of the relationship between structure and agency is used in this study. He argues that there are many social *fields* within which agents struggle to accumulate forms of *symbolic capital*. His concept of *habitus* encapsulates the complex inter-relationship he postulates between structure and agency. Bourdieu is often criticised for being overly deterministic in his analysis of human agency. This thesis attempts to counteract this charge by placing the analysis at the site of interaction of *field* (structure) and *habitus* (agency). It is a collective case study of the organisational, managerial and ideational structures (Grenfell and James, 1998) found within six university departments and the involvement of academics in the reproduction and resistance of those structures. The way in which the RAE serves to reproduce and/or reconstruct the disciplinary and institutional structures discussed is also of central concern to this thesis.

The study concludes that the RAE has had a profound impact on the forms of construction and evaluation within academic life but that this is mediated through the complex variety of organisational, managerial and ideational structures within institutions and across disciplines. Similarly, the *positioning* of individuals within institutional and disciplinary structures is important for understanding their particular struggles and strategies for recognition. This is most acute in struggles over the classification of research and non research active which has significantly increased the differentiation of academics within departments. This thesis also concludes by arguing that a greater understanding of the individual academics location within the context of specific institutional interactions will provide a necessary addition to Bourdieu's framework of analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

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Another property of fields, a less visible one, is that all the agents that are involved in a field share a certain number of fundamental interests, namely everything that is linked to the very existence of the field. This leads to an objective complicity, which underlies all the antagonisms. It tends to be forgotten that a fight presupposes agreement between the antagonists about what it is worth fighting about; those points of agreement are held at the level of what 'goes without saying', they are left in the state of doxa in other words everything that makes the field itself, the game, the stakes, all the presuppositions that one tacitly and even unwittingly accepts by the mere fact of playing, of entering into the game. Those who take part in the struggle help to reproduce the game by helping - more or less completely, depending on the field - to produce belief in the value of the stakes. The new players have to pay an entry fee which consists in recognition of the value of the game (selection and co-option always pay great attention to the indices of commitment to the game, investment in it) and in (practical) knowledge of the principles of the functioning of the game. (Bourdieu, 1993:74)

We play the game. We try and maximise the benefit to the department by the rules set on us. At least I do. And there are people in the department who say that it is absolutely silly. And I am afraid I think, as head of department the job is to maximise the resource in the department and to try and get it running well. You know, so you make decisions based upon these things. You learn the rules and you work to them, I am afraid. I am a shamed player of that game. If the government is going to play games with us and say this is the right work, I respond, and eh whether I approve or not is irrelevant.

(Professor Meggitt, ex-head of Department, Biology, GCU)

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is often discussed in terms of a 'game' both by commentators and academics. As the quotation from Professor Meggitt suggests, those participating in the assessment exercise often regard it precisely as a 'game', the complex rules of which have to be mastered. Despite the existence of criteria of assessment for the

RAE, the 'rules' of this 'game' are not immediately obvious, and the conflicts and difficulties over the definition of the 'rules' used in the RAE is a significant point of exploration within this study. The idea of the RAE as a 'game' further suggests that it is somehow insubstantial and is not to be taken seriously in the way that substantial 'real' academic work should be. The RAE in this context, therefore, could be thought of as a formality and not to be confused with the real substance of academic work. The main premise of this thesis, however, is that the 'game' of research and the RAE process are of central importance to academic life. The metaphor of the 'game' is extended further in the literature on the RAE and university organisation by studies which compare the league tables often produced for the RAE with those of football league tables (Tight, 2000:164).

The concept of the game as a metaphor of social relations is a significant feature in the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu. He argues that areas of the social world can be identified and labelled as *fields*. Within these social *fields* there are particular rules and strategies for individuals wishing to accumulate *symbolic capital*, defined as particular forms of profit which are operable in any given *field*. Agents involved in the field are aware of and understand the terms of play and the specific stakes involved. The test of their involvement is defined by their desire to compete with others for *symbolic capital* accumulation and to invest themselves in the stakes of the game. The metaphor of the game, therefore, in this context, is far from being seen as peripheral or insubstantial to the main activities of players in the field. It is, in fact, used to represent the very essence of those activities, the very definition of social life for the players. To take part in the game,

however, should not be understood as a cynical calculative move on the part of the agents involved. For Bourdieu, the terms of participation are a process of “unconscious involvement” and “psychological and emotional investment” in the values and beliefs of the game. Strategies are not seen as rational, calculated moves but more as (unconscious) emotional expressions of involvement and identification with the stakes in a particular social field.

This thesis examines the *research game* within universities; that is, the specific stakes and terms of play that are vital within the departmental and disciplinary context of university research. The forms of academic self-identity constructed by participation in research activities will also be analysed. I will investigate the significance of the RAE in shaping the *symbolic value* of activities within university departments. It is imperative, however, to place the RAE within the context of other changes in terms of structure and funding that have occurred in the higher education system during the 1980s and 1990s.

### **The Changing Context of Higher Education in the UK**

In Chapter One I discuss the way in which the funding of universities has changed and the different forms of accountability and assessment that have been introduced to monitor higher education institutions. The total funds given to universities have been substantially reduced over the last 20 years beginning with severe budget cuts during the early 1980s by the Thatcher administration (Halsey, 1995:7). The funding bodies also changed during

this period with the University Grants Committee (UGC) becoming the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and then finally the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Student numbers increased markedly at the same time (Halsey, 1995). The structure of the system of higher education has also changed as the 'binary divide' between universities and polytechnics ended in 1992 when all institutions were given university status. This has raised questions about the uniformity and diversity of the system. Universities and polytechnics began with very different missions over teaching and research. To what extent, therefore, can these different sectors now be seen as similar in their organisation and participation in research and teaching activities?

The RAE is one of the most important forms of accountability and it is argued in much of the literature it has been of considerable importance in shaping activities within institutions (Harley and Lowe, 1998; McNay, 1997b). Studies on the impact of the RAE have shown that academics consider that the RAE has had a profound effect on the activities of institutions and the way in which these are evaluated. The RAE has also been particularly significant in terms of the differentiation of institutions in so far as gradings awarded in the RAE identify an important measure, that of 'research excellence', by which universities are judged and placed in a hierarchy. For this reason, therefore, I have chosen the RAE as a central focus of this study.

## **The Changing Context of Academic Work**

Chapter Two examines the extent of differentiation within the U.K. university system beginning with an early study by Scott (1983) who argues that the academic profession within the U.K. is relatively homogeneous in character. The extent to which this was really the case is questionable. However, more recent research has shown the academic profession to be increasingly more highly differentiated, particularly in relation to terms and conditions of employment. The teaching and research role is also critical to the differentiation of academics in different disciplines and institutions (Halsey, 1995:7). Similarly, it can be argued that the values and beliefs of academics are not homogeneous in the way that Scott (1983) maintains. Thus, for example, literature on the organisation or higher education institutions (Becher, 1992:107), on the academic profession (Halsey, 1995:7), and on the production of knowledge across different disciplines (Becher, 1989:44), all show the extent of differentiation of social and cultural organisation of academics across institutions and across disciplines.

Trowler (1998) proposes a complex model of structural positioning within academic institutions and he also argues that individual academics are active in the process of cultural enactment (position-taking) of values and beliefs. The differentiation of positions and position-taking can be extended to individuals in different institutions and departments and even between the same individual in different social situations. It can be argued, therefore, that the present system of higher education in the U.K. is a complex and differentiated system. Both the structural and cultural framework and the part played



by academics in their adoption of particular practices, values and beliefs are important for understanding the workings of the academic system.

### **Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology**

These issues are further explored through the work of Pierre Bourdieu in Chapter Three. For Bourdieu, the key to understanding the academic world is the same as understanding any other social field. It is to analyse the forms of symbolic capital operative within a given field and struggles for their accumulation by agents within that field. Attempting to uncover ‘what motivates and organises the practices and experiences of agents’. The metaphor of the ‘game’ is central to an understanding of the academic world. Also the process of decision-making, Bourdieu argues is “everywhere” and not simply in the hands of those ‘key decision-makers’ who are assumed to hold power. Power in the academic world is identified by the possession of particular forms of symbolic capital. Decision-making about the means of accumulating such capital occurs everywhere and is carried out by everyone involved in that social field.

Chapter Four outlines the collective case study methodology that is used in this study.

The location of a ‘case’ is given as the department. The department can be seen as the site where there are multiple structural connections and the interconnections of different levels (institution, department, and discipline). Although there are multiple ‘cases’ in the sense that disciplines present a ‘case’ and so do individual academics.

The study is primarily qualitative with the majority of data being collected by semi-structured in depth interviews and by note taking at committee meetings. The study of universities and academics raises a number of methodological issues. The issue of confidentiality is particularly important, and the relationship between the researched and the research is explored. A final section argues that a reflexive position is important in two ways. Firstly, in terms of the sociological study of higher education. Bourdieu argues that this form of investigation allows for the possibility of a truly social 'science' in that the *positioning* of knowledge producers is analysed. Secondly, the 'objective social position' of the researcher must also be subject to investigation within the academic field.

### **Empirical Investigation of University Departments**

The three central chapters analyse empirical data concerning the disciplines of Biology, Sociology and English in two universities. Each chapter compares two departments from the same discipline in both universities. Similar themes and issues are common to each chapter but unique disciplinary and institutional concerns are investigated. The chapters are similar in their organisation with the following themes: 1) Organisational, Managerial and Ideational Structures; 2) Research Assessment, Research Policies and Research Activities; 3) Principles of Differentiation of Academic Work; 4) Principles of Differentiation of Research Work; 5) Academic habitus.

In Chapter Five I present evidence from the Biology departments at the two universities that, for the sake of anonymity, I have called Golden County University (GCU) and Royal County University (RCU). The first questions to be asked are in relation to the Organisational, Managerial and Ideational Structures that exist in these two departments. These are investigated primarily with regard to decision making over the RAE and particular research policies within the departments and the institutions as a whole. The claim that universities are becoming more managerial rather than collegial calls for special consideration. Research policies are further explored alongside the research activities and research ‘cultures’. Of particular importance is an analysis of *symbolic capital* and the differential accumulation of different types of capital. These are investigated both at the departmental level, in terms of RAE submission and policy statements from within the department and at the individual level, in terms of struggles to accumulate different forms of capital by academic staff. The different *positions* of individual staff in the social space (of the department/institution and in their discipline/sub-specialism) play a determining role in their *position taking*. The attempt to understand their particular ‘academic habitus’, therefore, will help to shed light on their individual struggles and strategies. Bourdieu argues that in order to understand the operation of a particular social field we must understand the principles of differentiation within that field. In this case, the principles of differentiation of academic and research work within these Biology departments. Central to this is also the analysis of the unique features of the ‘Biology field’, the wider structures of the discipline of Biology.

These themes are carried forward into Chapter Six, which deals with the Sociology departments. There is substantial literature on what could be described as the ‘Sociology of Sociology’ (Gouldner, 1957:37) and this has relevance for the present study. Firstly, the organisational, managerial and ideational structures are investigated. The status of staff, the movement of staff to and from the institution and the division of labour will be analysed in each department (organisational). The extent of collegial or managerial relations will then be assessed (managerial). Finally, the research policies, strategies and activities (ideational) will be investigated. Following Bourdieu (1988) the principal form of differentiation within the academic field is the location of staff either at the academic pole or at the research pole. The extent to which this scheme can be applied to staff in the sociology departments will be assessed. Other principal forms of differentiation are discussed, particularly in relation to research.

Chapter Seven deals with the two English departments and carries forward the themes from the previous chapters. The central concern is with the accumulation of academic as distinct from research capital, particularly at RCU, where previously the emphasis had been on teaching rather than research. The other major theme is collegiality, and at GCU the Members of staff in the English department are keen to describe themselves as being collegial, both in terms of participation in decision making and in terms of equality of division of labour. The extent to which this can be perceived as a ‘collective fiction’ is explored. The necessity of a sense of ‘common purpose’, exemplified in collegial organisation is discussed. In response to Gouldner’s (1957) argument on ‘locals’ and ‘cosmopolitans’ it is suggested that the meaning of ‘local’ may be changing as research

imperatives and participation outside the institution become more critical for the collective good of internal activities within the institution.

This thesis concludes that the RAE has become embedded within the principles of differentiation and evaluation of academic work within universities and is central to the construction of *symbolic capital* within the academic *field*. However, the extent to which the RAE has influenced the *practices* and *strategies* of academics has been mediated through their positioning within the myriad of institutional and disciplinary structures, their possession of forms of academic and research capital and their individual habitus.

## CHAPTER ONE

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### **Changing University-State Relations: funding and accountability in higher education**

Well I think (the RAE) is a completely counter productive exercise which in the end will seem to have eh benefited British science very little. It will have benefited certain institutions eh reasonably and eh I think it has consumed an inordinate amount of energy and eh it will be regarded as very cost effective as a way of improving science in the long term. I think it is completely ill conceived. It is a clumsy method of doing it. I would rather see all the Vice Chancellors lined up for a hundred yards dash and just assign money on that basis, because that exercise would take at the most two minutes. Even the weakest Vice Chancellor could do a hundred yards in two minutes and then get on with life. It is about as rational as that. At least you could train your Vice Chancellor and pick a healthy one. At least you would have a use for a Vice Chancellor at long last, you'd be able to select on a rational basis. It might televise well and you might get money from the rights of watching it. And you'd get rid of a few each time...

(Dr Martin, Biology, GCU)

The issue of funding for higher education in the UK is a contentious one. Funding cuts to higher education instigated by the Thatcher government in the early 1980s and the changing of bodies charged with distributing funds, has ensured much debate over the last 20 years on how best to organise funding for the higher education sector and also, in more recent times, how universities should be held accountable for the use of those funds.

This thesis is concerned with research funding to universities and the RAE. The introduction of this exercise has not enjoyed universal enthusiasm and claims have been made that it has had a detrimental effect on research work within university departments. An assessment of the research evidence that looks at the impacts of the RAE will form

the major part of this chapter. In order to set this particular policy change within the wider context of British higher education, however, I will also discuss the changing structure of the university sector in the UK and wider government policy on funding and accountability in higher education.

### **The British University System: unified or differentiated?**

The provision of higher education in the U.K. has expanded dramatically since the Second World War. Simon (1996) has argued that there was no 'system' that governed the small, elite collection of universities which existed just after the war. Since then, however, periods of significant expansion have turned the increasing number of higher education institutions into a university 'system'. The complex question of how this system might be characterised now will be the focus of this chapter together with a discussion of the evolution of attempts to assess the quality of the research conducted in higher education institutions. The third main section will review a selection of existing studies of the RAE. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on the hierarchical ordering of universities within the U.K. higher education system and the key indicators that inform the construction of the multiple hierarchies of universities. The part played by the RAE in the construction of these hierarchies will be assessed.

In 1945 there were sixteen distinct universities which were effectively self governing and had developed in their own unique ways (Simon, 1996). These were the universities of

Oxford and Cambridge, the London colleges and the regional universities in a number of cities in England, Wales and Scotland. The proportion of the population attending university continued to rise from this time on. The increase, post war, was in part related to servicemen entering universities upon leaving the armed forces. There was also a concern by government specifically to increase the number of science and engineering students which was outlined in a report by the Barlow committee in 1946. This increase was slight, however, compared to the escalation of student numbers which occurred during the 1960's. The Robbins Report (1963) outlined plans for expansion in higher education with an estimated target of 558,000 full time students in higher education by 1980-81, 350,000 of whom were to be in the university sector.

Table1: The growth of students in higher and further education since 1962 (thousands).  
Scott (1995)

	1962	1972	1982	1992
Higher Education	324	602	832	1,444
Further Education	446	914	1,505	2,574

Source: Scott (1995) The Meanings of Mass Higher Education

By the 1960's the university sector had become larger and more diverse in character. The sixteen universities comprising, Oxbridge, London, the 'city' universities and the Scottish ancient universities had expanded to include new 'Redbrick' universities such as Nottingham and new Colleges of Advanced Technology (CAT's). The 'Redbricks' and the CAT's were more science and technology based and were a result of the post war



decision by government to increase the number of professionally qualified scientists and engineers. CAT's were later designated technological universities after the Robbins report in 1965. During the 1960's, seven new 'Greenfield' sites were developed in order to increase the number of universities that could contain the growing number of undergraduate students. These universities were more humanities and social science based than the 'Redbricks' or the CAT's.

The Robbins era marked a huge advance in the move towards greater social equity in higher education. However, the growth in universities was conservative in that the outcome was more of the same, more fairly elitist institutions which were dominated by the social and cultural norms of the Oxbridge model (Shattock, 1996). Some of the 'Greenfield' universities modelled themselves on the college system of Oxford and Cambridge and many of them reproduced similar educational values and aspirations.

Around the mid 1960's concern was voiced as to the need for higher education to respond to the country's requirement for more applied courses, especially science courses. The CAT's having received university status were now part of the 'autonomous' group of universities for whom education was something more than educating for the professions or the commercial sector. The 'autonomous' university sector which was left to develop mostly unhindered by government intervention, was being called into question in terms of its ability to respond to the professional training needs of industrial Britain. In February 1965 the government announced that there would be no further expansion in the 'autonomous' university sector for the next ten years whereas the public sector of higher

education would increase rapidly. A speech by the Secretary of State for Education on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Woolwich Polytechnic denounced the snobbish obsession with university status and announced the creation of 30 polytechnics as a means of providing an alternative public higher education sector which would be more concerned with the application of knowledge and would therefore feed more directly into industry (Venables, 1996).

The polytechnic sector of higher education was created as a means of bridging the gap between technical colleges, further education colleges and the universities. The polytechnics were conceived as public sector institutions that, under direct government influence, would be able to better meet the needs of the country by concentrating on applied courses and producing professionally trained graduates. Examples from other European countries, such as the Grandes Ecoles in France and the Technische Hochschulen in Germany, were used to support the creation of the polytechnic sector<sup>1</sup>. The higher education provided by the polytechnics stood in direct contrast to that of the 'autonomous' universities. Thus, what is commonly termed the 'binary divide' was created within higher education between the universities and polytechnics. The aims and aspirations of these two sectors were profoundly different and so too were the management, governance and structure of the differing institutions.

The first key difference between the universities and the polytechnics, as already indicated, was the extent of the direct control by government. The old universities were chartered bodies whilst the polytechnics were parliamentary bodies. The universities

were governed by the Universities Grants Committee (UGC) and the polytechnics were given direction by the National Advisory Board (NAB). The significance and influence of the UGC will be discussed in the next section, but, it is important to note that for much of the time the UGC was considered to be a buffer body to protect universities from the influence of government. Universities, it was argued, should be shielded from the demands of government and should be left to set their own agendas. The polytechnics, on the other hand, were under direct control of central government through the direction of NAB - (with the addition of the CNAA to monitor degree awarding powers)

The structure, governance and forms of authority within both universities and polytechnics were quite different in a number of respects. The collegial model of the university pioneered by Oxford and Cambridge described not only how the university was structured, with separate and distinct colleges offering a variety of subjects, but also the mode of decision making and organisation of staff, with all members of staff (senior and junior) having shared responsibility for the direction, purpose and decision making within the colleges. The reality of this model of organisation within universities will be discussed in the next chapter. The 1960s 'Greenfield' universities adopted a 'crypto-collegiate' (Scott, 1995) model of the university since the department rather than the college was the primary academic unit (although there were separate colleges they represented particular disciplines/departments). However, they maintained the non-hierarchical, intimate social life within departments that contributed to an ethos of shared decision making and shared responsibility. Heads of department were appointed but they represented primarily administrative positions rather than formal decision making and

lead taking. This could be described as the 'democratic phase' (Clark, 1983) of academic authority within academia. Polytechnics, on the other hand, had departments as their primary academic unit often within schools or faculties. There was a greater degree of hierarchy within departments and schools/faculties with decision making being done by more senior academics and Professors. Polytechnics were also subject to more stringent forms of accountability (CNAA) perhaps necessitating a much stricter form of organisation. Promotion procedures within universities and polytechnics were also rather different with promotion within universities more likely to be founded on research and disciplinary advancement whereas within polytechnics the emphasis was more likely to be on teaching and administrative excellence.

The final area of difference between the two sectors concerns disciplines and involvement in research. These two things are linked with the aims and ideals that informed the universities and the polytechnics. The university model is considered by some commentators to be 'liberal' in the sense of seeking knowledge for its own sake, free from political or commercial pressure. There is an emphasis on 'pure' and 'theoretical' scientific research and indeed a privileging of research as the barometer of excellence of university activity. Disciplines in the universities are more traditional with subjects such as medicine, philosophy, the natural sciences, the arts and the social sciences. Polytechnics, on the other hand, began with the aim of providing more applied courses of study. Disciplines were less traditional and more vocational with an emphasis on subjects like social science and business studies. In 1976 the percentage of staff in universities in science subjects in universities was 31.3% whereas in the polytechnics it

was 18.5%. Conversely for social science staff the figure was 17.7% in the universities and 27.9% in the polytechnics. However by 1989 these differences had narrowed somewhat. For social science the number of staff in universities was 21.6% and in polytechnics 30.9%. In science the gap had substantially decreased with university staff at 26.6% and polytechnics staff at 25.6% (Halsey, 1995). More significant differences emerge, however, when one looks at the types of activities undertaken by staff in these institutions. University staff within each of the disciplines were more likely to be involved in research than were their polytechnic counterparts (Halsey, 1995). Despite the comparable percentages of staff in science subjects within both sectors, the extent to which research activity in these subjects is undertaken and furthermore, the kind of research which this might be, either pure or applied, would be significantly different across the various institutions.

The binary divide is no longer in existence since the decision in 1992 to grant all polytechnics university status. Even before this change, however, it could be argued that the limited dichotomy of two different types of institution could be simplistic. The composite picture of the higher education system in the UK could show institutions to be more diverse in their history, structure and patterns of governance as well as the activities and attitudes of staff who work within them.

The nine (twelve including institutions within Scotland and Wales) sub sectors of higher education institutions shown in Figure 1 give some indication of the multiple types of institutions which might exist. The binary divide of higher education which existed pre -

1992 gave a simplified picture of the structure of higher education for it concealed, at least nine sub-sectors (Scott, 1995).

Figure 1: Sub sets of the English University System (Scott, 1995: 45)

1. Oxford and Cambridge; ancient universities, the distinct collegial system, governed solely by the academic guild, the college and its fellows are the primary unit not academic departments. Substantial extra financing.
2. University of London; federal university where academic controls and funding decisions are devolved to the large multi-faculty schools. Receives large share of funding due to the high concentration of expensive medical education. London is the archetype of the English university because it is here that the pattern of departments and chairs was first established.
3. The Victorian civic universities; for example, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Bristol. Founded by provincial lawyers, doctors, industrialists and politicians. Range of subjects including extra mural studies and strong research.
4. Redbrick universities, e.g Nottingham. They are very like the civics but are smaller and their subject range is not so wide.
5. Durham and Keele (?)
6. Technological universities (former colleges of advanced technology), e.g Bath, Loughborough, Aston, Salford. Engineering bias means difficult recruitment. Links with industry make them more stable in 1990s climate.
7. Open university.
8. Old 'new' universities, Greenfield sites established during the 1960s.
9. New 'new' universities, former polytechnics. Both old and new were the key formative institutions in post war higher education. The former embodied an extension, or modernisation of the university tradition and the latter an alternative to it.

It might be possible to further expand these different categories, but the research evidence which might give more of an insight into the differences and similarities between these institutions is certainly lacking. If there is now a system of higher education in the UK it is not fully clear how this might be characterised, and the extent of institutional differentiation needs further exploration.

### **University Funding and Forms of Accountability**

The Universities Grants Committee (UGC) was established in 1919, with the primary purpose of directing government funding to universities in the UK. The amount of government funding was substantially increased over time such that by 1946 two thirds of university income came from central government (compared with one third only a few years earlier). The period from 1919 until the 1960's was considered to be the glory days of the UGC, often described as the 'golden age'. In the 1940s and 50s universities were facing a highly positive future with full support from central government for their activities. Indeed, the first issue of 'Higher Education Quarterly' in 1946 praised the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his policies for higher education (Shattock, 1996).

Peter Scott (1995) traces the development and final abolition of the UGC in five stages. The first is the 'golden age' described above where universities and the government seemed to have similar visions for higher education. The amount of funding awarded to universities was quite liberal, and there was an understanding that universities should

have autonomy of purpose with as little interference from central government as possible. The UGC, therefore, was the key unit to defend the interests of the universities and provide a 'buffer' between the universities and any form of political pressure. The UGC, as representative of the universities, took charge of the active planning of the university sector. The 1956 White Paper<sup>2</sup> demonstrated a willingness by government to let the UGC determine the development of higher education.

The second period of the UGC which Scott describes is the 1960s Robbins<sup>3</sup> era. At this time, the government introduced a number of measures that threatened to upset its relationship with the universities which was comfortably mediated and controlled by the UGC. One of these measures was the setting up of the Robbins committee to investigate and make plans for the development of higher education.

The third period of the UGC, which Scott describes, took place during the latter part of the 1970s and the 1980s when the capacity of the UGC to protect the interests of the universities began to lessen. During the 1970s inflationary pressures caused the quinquennial system of funding to be restructured. In 1973/4 there were substantial cutbacks for university funding. This measure preceded what Moore (1996) describes as the watershed of 1981 when substantial cuts were made to university budgets. During 1981/2 and 1983/4 substantial cuts were made to university funding amounting to approximately 15%, despite the protest of the UGC who argued that any more than a 2.5% cut in university funding would lead to chaos within institutions. The response of the universities was to cut student numbers and to close some university departments.



The fourth phase of the UGC outlined by Scott, however, involved a realisation that the UGC had been doubly undermined and necessitated a very different approach to university-government relations. The UGC was undermined both in its claim to act as a buffer body of protection for universities from the government and in its attempt to champion its own apolitical policy for higher education. The result was a UGC which was less benign and more dirigiste (Shattock, 1996). In 1981 the UGC carried out a survey exercise of all subject areas in universities, looking at student numbers, resources, the balance of subjects and the quality of individual institutions. The results of this survey formed the basis of a report published in September 1984 entitled 'A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990's'. This report laid out the prospects for an effective university sector based on strong empirical evidence on institutions. The government response to this report was published in a Green Paper (DES, 1985) which reiterated the Thatcherite mantra for market forces to prevail and indeed, that higher education was '...a consumption good..., something that was inessential from an economic point of view and should be linked with quantity to the rise and fall of the economy' (Moore, 1996: 193). It would appear, therefore, that the attempts by the UGC to have some form of influence over government policy making on higher education were losing ground.

The government's resources plans for universities predicted a further fall of 1.5% in each of the years 1985/6, 1986/7 and 1987/8. The UGC's response to this was to instigate a more formal assessment exercise than the review of 1981. This would involve all institutions putting forward a number of statements on their overall objectives for the

planning period, research plans, student numbers and financial forecasts. This information was used by the UGC to determine the amount of funding given to each institution. It amounted to a form of selectivity based on these criteria, although Moore (1996) argues that there was no detailed information given as to how the final funding decisions were taken.

The UGC gave no indication as to how they split the total resources between their various categories, nor did they indicate how the research grant element was calculated in relation to the question of research council grants on the one hand, and private money raised for research on the other. Combined, furthermore, with a lack of information as to the relative weightings given to the 37 subject cost centres... as regards teaching, the process is shrouded in mystery at a micro-level, although the nature of the changes can be discerned at the macro-level. (Moore, 1996: 196)

The UGC was struggling, therefore, to distribute a diminishing resource whilst trying to protect the unit of resource for universities. This struggle failed, and as a result the UGC chose the option of selectivity to attempt to protect the unit of resource for at least some institutions/cost centres. As Peter Scott maintains, however, the UGC was failing at its task of protecting the university sector; it was simply becoming an arm of government. In 1985 the Jarratt<sup>4</sup> report recommended that the structure and operation of the UGC should be examined. In response to this recommendation the government set up the Croham committee to examine the activities of the UGC. The result of the findings of this committee takes us to the fifth and final phase of the UGC set out by Peter Scott, its abolition. The UGC was abolished in 1989 and replaced by the Universities Funding Council (UFC).

In his retrospective summation of the work of the UGC Michael Shattock describes it as a conservative body which blocked any form of innovation and change within the university sector, protecting it where possible with the block grant system and ensuring that universities remained, as far as possible, autonomous and free from government direction. He also maintains, however, that the UGC fought and conserved to a significant degree a strongly held academic culture.

But the UGC left a lasting impression on the university system. It can be criticised for not encouraging more diversity and more innovation, but the consequence of managing a system on the basis of academic judgement...is that it created an environment that had an internal consistency of standards and values which were secure and instinctive. (Shattock, 1994: 152)

This was significant for the funding procedures about to be introduced. Both the funding of teaching and research within higher education would no longer be automatic but would be subject to a form of accountability which would determine the amount of funds allocated. The UFC was subsequently replaced by HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) and separate funding councils for Scotland and Wales, SHEFC and HEFCW respectively. The funding for teaching and research was differentiated. The changing bodies controlling funds to universities and the evolution of the means by which university research, in particular, was funded will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

## **Research Funding and the Research Assessment Exercise: evaluating research activities**

And the statement at the time was the government asked the council to be selective in the allocation of research funds. So I mean the primary policy has really been the issue of being selective, i.e. distributing research funds to where quality is exhibited. And em I suppose that is contextualised in the system which prior to 1992, there were about 50 institutions that were funded for research and then we have got a situation where there is probably 150 now... And I think there was an expectation in the sector that with the end of the binary line that all the institutions would have the opportunity to become like a 'traditional' university. But no extra money...was provided to the council so there was no way that the council could actually meet the expectations. (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE, 1997)

In May 1985 the UGC asked all universities to produce detailed information on their plans for the future. This included information on student numbers and information on research plans. This procedure was initiated as part of a review of grant distribution by the UGC. Universities were asked to present the information on research plans under a number of headings: 1. Present research expenditure, 2. Research planning machinery and practice, 3. Overall research plans and priorities, 4. Research profiles of individual subject areas. Research profiles of individual subject areas included the number of research staff and research students, titles of no more than five recent books or articles and other examples of research achievement.

This process was called a Research Selectivity Exercise and was intended to enable the distribution of funds to universities to be done selectively according to merit. The means by which this process was carried out was rather rudimentary, and criticisms were made of the lack of consistency in the criteria of judgement, incomplete data and anonymity.

Accusations were made that there was little standardisation in terms of data submitted by institutions, and the process was kept secret such that not even the names of assessors were divulged (Cave et al, 1997).

The University Funding Council (UFC) replaced the UGC as the body to allocate funds to universities and the 1989 selectivity exercise was subsequently introduced. The principle of a selective allocation of funds and the procedure for doing so remained similar to that of the 1986 exercise. Information was supplied by universities which was then assessed by subject sub-committees. These subject committees were made up of 70 advisory groups and panels with approximately 300 members. Information produced for these advisory groups included details of numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates, research students and doctoral submission rates, research contracts and a summary of the research priorities and objectives of each subject unit. Details of research staff and their publications were also included. A rating scale was devised which allowed subject units to be assessed along a five point scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

The data supplied by institutions for both the 1986 and 1989 selectivity exercises, therefore, referred to institutions as a whole and included student number related (SR) as well as judgement related factors (JR) concerning research productivity. However, these judgement factors gradually came to assume more importance in determining how much funding was allocated to universities (Taylor, 1993). Thus, the judgement of the 'quality' of research activities was assuming more importance than the calculation of need based on the size of cost centre and number of students. The more discriminatory concept of

research 'quality' was the key to determining research funding. Those cost centres receiving low ratings would no longer receive any funding.

The blueprint for measuring research performance emerged from these early exercises and universities were, to some extent, more prepared for the radical changes that followed the next selectivity exercise in 1992. Within the 1992 RAE there were major changes both to the funding system and the funding body. Firstly, the ending of the binary divide meant that all 'new' universities were included in the exercise, and this substantially increased the number of units of assessment (UOAs). Secondly, the block grant principle of the old UGC was undermined by the designation of funding as 'for research' and 'for teaching'. A funding formula was also introduced which directly related research rating to the amount of research funding allocated. Thirdly, the UFC was replaced by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England (HEFCE), Scotland (SHEFC) and Wales (HEFCW). They would now be responsible for the funding across the entire sector ('new' and 'old' universities).

The conduct of the 1992 RAE was an extension of the principles set out in the 1989 selectivity exercise. The process of 'informed peer review' was upheld and assessment panels were set up to judge the 'quality' of the UOAs within each subject area. The details of this exercise are given in Appendix 1.

The main principles set out in the 1992 RAE remained in place for the 1996 RAE. However, a number of significant changes were made. Firstly, only the best four

publications for each research active member of staff were listed (with a note of the number of other publications). This amendment was made in the hope that the 'quality' of research publications would be judged rather than the 'quantity'. Secondly, the rating scale was extended from a 5 point to a 7 point scale (1,2,3a,3b,4,5,5\*). Only those units rated above 2 were allocated funds. This served to increase the amount of funding given to the top rated UOAs and reduce that given to lower rated UOAs, hence strengthening the selectivity principle. A comparison of the concentration of resources is given in Appendix 2. DevR was replaced by Non-formula funding (NFF) which served the same purpose and was allocated the same amount of funding.

Another significant change to the 1996 RAE was the publication of criteria set out by each assessment panel prior to the submissions. This measure was introduced in response to complaints that the Council were not making clear the criteria upon which UOAs would be assessed.

The first research selectivity exercise in 1986 was used to identify high quality research and to reward the 'better performers'. The majority of the resource, however, was distributed according to department size. In the later assessment exercises, all of the formula funding was allocated according to the judgement of research 'quality'. The 'quality' of work is the dominant parameter (Johnston, 1995b). The key questions, therefore, are what defines 'quality' in research? How do panels come to make their judgements?

The 1992 and the 1996 RAE in some way progressed from the closed door policy of the earlier selectivity exercises, and greater attempts have been made to make the system more open and accountable. However, many critiques are still made of the process. These critiques range from arguments for simple adjustments that could improve the process to a complete denial of the validity or worth of the exercise.

The RAE is claimed to operate on a system of ‘informed peer review’ of research activities. For the 1989 exercise and the ones that followed, “professional knowledge and judgement were itemised as one of the four main criteria to be used in the whole process...” (Cave, et al., 1997: 202). Peer review is an accepted process within higher education as one of the primary means of judging, involving individuals who have the professional knowledge to be able to understand and assess the significance or importance of the work of others. Critically, the judges, although they may assume a high status, are considered to be on equal terms with the judged within a community of scholars.

In contrast to the previous exercises, the 1996 RAE was designed to make the process of assessment more transparent. The way in which assessors made a decision about ‘the most appropriate approach to the assessment of research in its subject area’ was made more explicit. This development was in response to the critics of the peer review system who saw possibilities of bias and distortion within such a closed and inarticulated process. This process can be too subjective, and bias can occur specifically in favour of large and well known departments. Similarly the ‘halo-effect’ can prejudice assessors in



favour of cost centres located in high status institutions (Cave et al., 1997). In response, therefore, the 1996 RAE included at the outset statements of criteria for each UOA, developed by the panels responsible for the relevant subject area.

These statements of criteria for assessment, to some extent, address further critiques that had been made about the comparability of gradings between subject areas. For example, was a five awarded in chemistry the same as a five awarded in history? The averages of grades awarded within different subject areas were studied and revealed quite significant differences. For example, in the 1992 RAE in history 2 out of 83 UOA's were awarded a grade five (6%) whereas anthropology gave a grade of five to six out of the seventeen submissions (35.3%) (Griffith, 1995).

The decision-makers were different, their relativities were different and it would be surprising if their interpretations of definitions were the same... The whole defence of the lack of comparability between panels is typically sloppy, intellectually disreputable and self justificatory... (Griffith, 1995: 20)

The decision to have a statement of criteria of assessment was a direct response to the critiques of lack of accountability and potential bias within the closed system of 'peer review'. Given that these statements were left to individual panels to decide upon may also be in part a recognition that criteria of excellence may vary between UOA's. Although there may be variation between subject areas in terms of how 'quality' is defined, HEFCE would argue that the overall gradings relating to international and national excellence would provide adequate measures that were 'reasonably comparable' (Griffith, 1995) across these subject areas.

In order to look in more detail at the process by which the RAE assessment takes place it is useful to look at one particular UOA. In looking at the sociology UOA, I shall draw upon the list of panel members for the 1996 RAE, the statement given on criteria for assessment and brief accounts from individuals who have served in the RAE panel.

The panel included ten Professors and one representative from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). All members of the panel are high status sociologists, as evidenced by their Professorial titles. These members were nominated by the panel chair informed by nominations given in consultation with the sector. It is argued, therefore, that these people, based on their reputations and professional expertise are the best able to assess research activity in their subject area. Seven of the panel members come from pre-1992 ('old') universities and three of the members are from post-1992 ('new') universities. Thus, the criticism that panel members are biased towards 'old' universities may be partially upheld for sociology at least. However, in other subjects the 'new' universities are even less in evidence. For example, in Biology only one member of the panel out of thirteen came from the 'new' university sector (HEFCE, Membership of Assessment Panels, 1996).

In terms of the statement of criteria set out by this sociology panel (RAE, 1996), the main categories were, 1) the quality of publications; 2) evidence of the vitality of the research culture, 3) the extent of postgraduate research activity and 4) evidence of esteem evidenced by external funding. These criteria outline a combination of key performance

indicators. It is these key indicators which provide the condition of 'informed peer review'. Professional judgements are informed by these 'objective' indicators and they include a variety of 'input' and 'output' measures. Output measures include publications. The particular value attached to types of publication may vary across subject areas. For the sociology panel they ranked publications in the order of authored book, academic journal article, edited book or scholarly writing, chapter in edited book and then also a category of 'other' which could include the editing of a book or book series. In comparison, the biology panel highlighted the importance of refereed journal articles. The biology panel also indicated that due attention would be paid to the 'informed views of the relative standing of the journals'. The sociology panel likewise asserted that "the greatest weight will be attached to articles containing innovative work in journals with rigorous editorial and refereeing procedures. The panel will, if necessary and where possible, examine the rigour of those procedures, the composition of editorial boards, the rate of acceptance and rejection, and any other information, in order to determine the journal's relative standing" (HEFCE, Criteria for Assessment, 1996).

Output indicators such as publications have been criticised in a number of ways (Johnes and Taylor, 1990; Cave et al., 1997). The greatest criticism has been where assessment is reliant on the impact factor of the relative journals and the citation indices. Citations data are collected by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) and they are published annually in the Science Citations Index. Impact factors refer to the citation ratings of particular journals to determine how important or significant they are within the subject area. Difficulties with citation indices are numerous but include the problem that they are

heavily weighted towards North American sources and also the issue of self-citation and possible artificial inflation of ratings (Cave et al., 1997).

The statement of criteria for the RAE makes no reference to the use of citation indices and impact factors (although there is evidence that they 'inform' the relative standing of journals and are certainly used as reference by academics and editorial boards also scrutinise the citations data very carefully). However, further problems occur in relation to the identification of weightings used to measure the importance of publications. The weightings used can have a highly significant effect on the rankings of individual units. Particular weighting schemes can produce dramatically different results (Johnes and Taylor, 1990).

Further measures of research quality are shown by the indicators of research 'inputs'. The 'input' measures highlighted by the sociology panel were 'postgraduate research activity', including the number of full time postgraduate research students, number of research degrees awarded, the number of studentships awarded and any evidence of publications or other 'output' by research students. A further 'input' measure is that of research income, especially that from the research councils where the rigorous processes of peer judgement imply a high degree of esteem and success. These 'inputs' are all considered to be direct evidence of the 'quality' of research activity within costs centres. However, reservations are expressed about the relationship between these 'input' indicators and the 'quality' of research produced. For example, the measure of research income may be biased in favour of large departments who are likely to produce more

research and as a result take a greater share of research income (Cave et al., 1997). There may be no direct relationship between the measure of research 'input' and the quantity or quality of the research work then produced. Furthermore, questions are raised concerning the possible 'illusion of validity' which is given to the funding decisions of research councils and other funding bodies (Gillett, 1989).

The use of performance indicators using 'input' and 'output' measures is an important feature of the assessment exercise and serves as an 'objective' measure to 'inform' the panel members' judgement. Quantitative research on the relationship between these performance indicators and the grade awarded within the RAE has shown that there is a strong positive correlation between certain performance indicators and the grade achieved (Taylor, 1993; Taylor, 1995). For sociology departments within the 1992 RAE, the indicators most highly related to grade were number of research active staff, authored books, short works and refereed journal articles and number of full time postgraduate research students. These three indicators accounted for three quarters of the variance in grades between cost centres (Taylor, 1995). The evidence of 'quantity' measured in these indicators has a tenuous link with attempts to assess the 'quality' of research work produced.

Furthermore, these measures are never wholly 'objective' and often rely on the 'subjective' peer review decisions made within other contexts such as peer review conducted for journal article submissions and research council peer review. It is for this reason that RAE panel members can be described as operating on a 'second order reading

of the signs' of reputation and esteem based on other 'first order peer evaluations' (Bourke, 1997).

In short, the system is shot through with what I would call the judgements not of peers but of fellow professionals who have been socialised into and have learned the pecking orders, the esteem languages and structures of their discipline and sub-disciplines. (Bourke, 1997: 23)

A final category used by the sociology RAE panel for 1996 was that of 'research culture', a category less open to quantification and less easily defined. The panel recognises that any attempt to assess cultural forms and processes is dependent on particular contexts where structures and processes differ. They may also be based on informal groups and networks that are not easily assessed and measured. This category also measures the wider influence of research activities in terms of promoting the discipline or subject area internationally, forging links with other disciplines and dissemination of research work in non-academic contexts.

There is a short section of the assessment procedure that is followed by the panel members. In the case of sociology this includes information on how quality of research work will be based on each research active member of staff, what happens when there are disputes over gradings, and the division of labour of the panel into sub-groups dealing with areas of expertise. Interdisciplinary work can be assessed across panels. Evidence from members of RAE panels pays testament to the hard work and careful thought which characterised the assessment procedure (Urry, 1997).

Furthermore, a distinction was made between international 'links' and international 'excellence' (Urry, 1997). It was not sufficient to simply have contacts with colleagues from abroad or present papers at international conferences. Further evidence of international collaboration and international standing was required. However, even given these qualifications it was not easy for panels to determine what this meant in terms of awarding a grade either individually or as a group or UOA. An example of this critical decision making process is given by a member of the 1992 sociology panel.

We just went through individually and then you did go right through and the national excellence thing, the key thing, national or not, eh and of course there was this sort of thing, if they had an internationally excellent shall we say, if they had an outstanding individual lets say it caused great difficulty. A department like ('old university'), which..., has (famous sociologist) there who is a really big name in (research area), but he has retired. You know but how do you do it when you have got, I am just making this up so that... say out of everyone people are clearly not internationally excellent but then you have this person... so then you finish up with I think it is a very good four or a very poor four and those sort of discriminations were used then you know and there were quite agonised discussions. (Member of Sociology Panel, 1992 RAE)

This testament highlights the criticism that:

...at the heart of the assessment process lies the mistaken belief that standards of international and national 'excellence', however defined, are capable of being translated into concepts rigorous enough to sustain the division into 5 or 7 grades. (Griffith, 1995: 40)

Within the RAE, therefore, attempts have been made to define more precisely the criteria to be used and to outline the procedures by which 'quality' should be measured. The subject specialists define these criteria and then determine procedures. 'Informed peer review', whether characterised as first or second order, is the means by which

judgements are made. For the end result, however, a grade must be attached to each UOA. How this can be achieved in a meaningful way is a complex and contradictory process.

The criticisms made of the RAE have been in relation to firstly, the intent of the assessment exercise, secondly, the process and procedures, including members of the panel and criteria used and thirdly, the negative consequences for universities and university departments.

The RAE is primarily a selectivity exercise that is designed to influence the allocation of scarce resources to the research groups that are judged to display the highest quality. The intention is to concentrate limited resources in the places where the highest quality research is being done. But the intention, according to HEFCE, is also to encourage institutions to compete for these resources. There are two models which can be put forward to describe the process, as argued by the Head of Research Policy at HEFCE;

...on the whole what we are saying in terms of basic research, anyone who is good let them have the money to do it. And then on the other side of it is the competitive element rather than the concentration model, one where you actually say everyone can compete because it is dynamic and things change (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE, 1997)

Currently the RAE is seen as a process of 'ranking'. There is no attempt to plan the concentration of research funding but simply to measure the quality of research activities within different institutions. However, critics argue that competition is unequal from the start and fails to take into account differentials between institutions.



By failing to take into account to any significant extent the relative poverty of many institutions in material and human resources the system ensures that institutions generally will remain at their present level. (Griffith, 1995: 44)

The extent to which the RAE serves to re-order, refine and reinforce differentials between universities and university departments is the key issue within this thesis. The evidence for this will be further examined in future chapters. As a means of introducing this question, it is imperative to discuss some of the studies that have looked generally at the impact of the RAE on universities and university departments.

### **Studies on the Impact of the Research Assessment Exercise**

The RAE cannot be separated from other policy changes that have been made to higher education since the early 1980s. It would be difficult, therefore, to attribute any changes in institutional or individual behaviour directly to this assessment process. However, many of the studies that have examined this issue have tended to conclude that the RAE has been very significant in shaping activities within universities. The extent to which this effect has been a negative or positive one is central to the debate on how the RAE should best be conducted. HEFCE maintain that the RAE is simply a ranking exercise, a measurement of research activity as it exists within institutions.

...because our argument is that it merely measures quality. I mean you know that it is just a device and it is done by the communities themselves so it shouldn't actually distort, it should really reflect. But the problem is that if you are not

involved in the community you then get into a situation where you play to the rules rather than play to the quality... making everyone publish does not make people do better research. But I don't think it is an unreasonable requirement that they should both do better research and publish occasionally. So I don't think it is distorting behaviour, the question is, does it not accurately affect real improvements in quality... But I tend to be optimistic in the sense that you have got to believe that all those people didn't put all that effort into it and it got worse. (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE, 1997)

There are many assumptions being made in this statement. Firstly, that the academic 'communities' are in control of this device, this measurement activity. Secondly, that within this community there may be insiders and outsiders, ones who do not play instinctively the research game but play openly to the stated rules. Thirdly, that it is not an unreasonable requirement that academics should do better research and publish. This is stated despite an earlier claim that insufficient funds are now available to all universities to sustain a research mission.

And remember at the beginning of the eighties we were talking about a situation where roughly most academics would do 70% teaching and 30% research. I mean there was variation but everybody was funded around that level, to a situation where selectivity has meant that that no longer can be the case, that everybody can do 70/30... They no longer have the funds for every member of staff to have the kind of job description that they had previously. So that is the fundamental problem, is that for institutions that have not had sufficient quality, they can't... they are gradually getting to a situation where they can no longer sustain a traditional academic job and that is the hard part. (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE, 1997)

The question then arises of how research is to be improved in those universities that can no longer sustain 30% research time for members of staff. This has to be considered in light of the statement of criteria for the RAE discussed earlier where the sociology panel were focusing on 'research culture' which involved assessing not simply the 'quality' of research being done but the number of staff involved in producing the research. It is

important within all universities, therefore, that staff are involved in research if they are to compete and achieve a place within the university rankings. Despite the claim made above that the RAE does not distort behaviour within universities, it is acknowledged that the requirements of the RAE can aid institutional management.

...research has been an unmanaged activity in the past and it is becoming managed now because of this kind of impulse. But I am not sure, well I think the heart of the thing is that institutions themselves have to decide on what strategic management of research evolves. The trouble is that at the moment the RAE is a tool... it is the only management tool they have because it gives you a set of criteria, it gives you a kind of output measure, it kind of is a way of running it. And if it didn't exist I don't know what you'd do. But I mean it isn't, I think you have to be concerned that that is something in a sense really that is run by us to assess and fund, which is the fuel for their strategic missions. (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE, 1997)

This statement highlights the purpose of the RAE to 'assess and fund' the direction of which is given by HEFCE. The earlier contention that the RAE should not distort behaviour since it is run by the communities themselves called in question this assertion. The academic communities may determine the criteria on which judgements are based and carry out the assessment but they in no way direct the purpose of the RAE which is to grade UOA's on a seven point scale and fund selectively according to merit. It is argued by Harley and Lee (1997) that the peer review process has been co-opted for this purpose. 'Informal peer review within a collegiate system of control is very different from institutionalised peer review linked to a ranking system designed for funding purposes' (Harley and Lee, 1997).

Institutional responses to the imperative of the RAE have, as the statement above suggests, made the management of research activities a significant feature in most, if not

all, university departments. This has been shown most clearly in a project carried out by Ian McNay on behalf of HEFCE (McNay, 1997). McNay's report is based on a questionnaire survey of fifteen universities, focus group meetings and institutional visits, all conducted after the 1992 RAE. Questionnaires were sent to members of staff at each of these universities and 393 responses were returned which could be analysed. A separate questionnaire was sent to heads of department asking more general questions on the research activities within the department as a whole. McNay (1997) acknowledges that it is impossible to separate the RAE from other features of funding and accountability within higher education. However, his survey attempts to throw light on the perceptions of members of staff within universities on the particular significance of the RAE.

McNay's report deals with the management and organisation of research activities within these universities and includes 33 'institutional strategy vignettes'. These vignettes demonstrate the extent to which organisation and monitoring of research activities have increased considerably within all universities.

At institutional level, the impact of the RAE has been considerable. An audit of central service support, of protocols, of funding accountability, of monitoring and reporting processes, of decision-making and leadership, of criteria of judgements, of systematic strategic planning against staged targets and performance indicators would find considerable change in 1996 from, say, 1991, according to submissions from senior managers. (McNay, 1997: 31)

The vignettes provided by McNay give a very brief overview of the strategies outlined above and provide only an outline sketch of the possible multiple changes which have

occurred. This makes it difficult to compare universities (although McNay does draw a division between post 92 and pre 92 universities) and to allow any in-depth understanding of how these strategies interrelate with university processes. Given the methodology, it is also difficult to ascertain the significance and meaning of particular perceptions and attitudes within specific contexts. Furthermore, the methodology does not allow institutional strategies and differences between disciplines to be linked with individual staff members' perceptions, practices and attitudes within specific institutions. However, McNay's work provides an excellent overview of the specific concerns and responses of individuals across a variety of university contexts and some fascinating summaries of institutional research policy across different universities.

Three quarters of the heads of department surveyed claimed that the RAE had stimulated major strategic review across the institution. An example from the vignette of university X demonstrates the kind of strategic review that might take place. A research committee was established in 1985 at this university and a policy was set in place to develop research and recruit staff with a research record or substantial potential. Research performance indicators were identified and used to make internal assessments. After the 1989 exercise, the departments who had performed well in the RAE were used as models of good practice. Research strategies were now required from devolved units and a publications database was also established (McNay, 1997).

The effects of these research policies and strategies are reported in great detail from the responses given to the open ended focus group questions and the questionnaire to both

department heads and members of staff. There is too much to discuss here, but a few important findings will be mentioned in relation to the perceived impact of the RAE on policy and management, staffing issues, teaching and publication and the process and content of research (McNay, 1997).

There has been much written and discussed within academia on the 'transfer market' of individuals between institutions. This involves universities 'buying in research stars' from institutions in order to boost their research profile and ensure a higher grade in the RAE. McNay's report argues that this claim has been greatly exaggerated, although it is shown that some institutions did set aside funds for this purpose. The movement of staff, where it did occur, was mainly in the pre 1992 universities, and the greatest loss of staff happened in the departments which had been rated three or four in the RAE.<sup>5</sup> This implies that there may be a gravitation of the best up and coming researchers to more highly rated institutions, thus increasing the level of concentration of resources and personnel. Further work is necessary to determine the extent of this migration of labour, specifically during the period following the 1996 RAE. McNay concludes, however, that following the 1992 RAE, 'the overall picture is one of stability' (McNay, 1997).

In terms of appointments and promotions within universities, McNay's report found evidence that the significance of research activity had become a dominant factor both in the recruitment of staff and the internal rewards system. In the pre 1992 institutions especially there was a concern that only 'proven researchers' or researchers with 'potential' should be considered for appointment. There was also a separation between

teaching and research with individuals being designated as either research active or non research active or 'teaching only'. Of the heads surveyed, 44% thought that the RAE had had a negative effect on teaching. They reported an increase in the amount of time spent on research by academics. However, there was also a corresponding rise in reported time spent on teaching, presumably as a result of the large increase in student numbers.

According to Halsey (1995) the proportion of time spent on undergraduate teaching remained the same in the universities (26%) between 1976 and 1989 but increased substantially in the polytechnics from 27% to 43%. The amount of time reportedly spent on research activities decreased both in the universities and the polytechnics over the same time period from 40% to 28% in the universities and 18% to 15% in the polytechnics. The output from research activities, however, substantially increased over this time period (Halsey, 1995). This conflicting evidence raises issues concerning the methodology of collecting data on how academics spend their time, mainly by self-reporting in surveys. Other research studies have used time diaries which might be more accurate (Court, 1996). Questions also arise concerning how research is defined, especially in different institutional and disciplinary contexts.

More detailed research work has been done on the impacts of the RAE on university teaching (Jenkins, 1995). From the results of a questionnaire survey of geography departments, Jenkins (1995) argues that the scholarship of research has been pushed up the university agenda to the detriment of the four other forms of scholarship, including the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of service and the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990)<sup>6</sup>. The extent to which these different forms of scholarship can and should

be identified as distinct and separable activities is open to question. However, where Boyer argues that the US faculty reward system has served to devalue the integration, service and teaching forms of scholarship, Jenkins (1995) similarly argues that the funding arrangements in the UK have resulted in a devaluing of academic work which is not defined as an 'original contribution to knowledge'. This is shown, he argues, by the fact that the RAE does not reward teaching related materials such as textbooks and that more and more teaching is being done by part time teachers and postgraduate students, though he acknowledges that there are variations between institutions on this practice.

According to McNay's report, 62% of heads of department believed that the RAE had had negative effects on teaching, and this belief was more pronounced in the pre 1992 university sector where 72% of heads expressed this view compared to 44% in the post-1992 universities. Conversely heads of department believed that the RAE had had a positive effect on research with 71% expressing this view, 67% and 80% from the pre 1992 and post 1992 institutions respectively. The heads believed that the RAE had re-invigorated staff who had been underproducing and had encouraged researchers to be more 'competitive, proactive and would start to sell themselves and increase productivity' (McNay, 1997). The belief that research is now better managed within institutions was held by 63% of heads of department.

The views expressed on the impact of the RAE on the process and content of research work were mixed and demonstrated the complexity of trying to capture these relations within an attitudes survey. However, there was strong support for the claim that rather



than posing as a threat to collaboration and co-operation on research, the RAE had increased contact and collaboration within and between universities. A trend was also reported towards team research and away from the model of the lone researcher. In terms of the content of research work, 40% of heads of department said that the preferences of panel members affected their decisions on which aspects of work to invest in, although the perceptions of staff were that this had less of an impact. 46% of heads believed that more conservative approaches to research were encouraged by the RAE believing for example, that interdisciplinary work was not encouraged. Only 12% perceived a shift towards 'pure' (more highly regarded) research (McNay, 1997). Overall, there were conflicting views on how the RAE had impacted on the 'quality' of research with 81% of heads maintaining that research in their department had improved. Staff agreed with this assessment but not quite so strongly. It is important, however, to distinguish between particular measures of quality and to recognise that the RAE provides a primary indicator and definer of views on 'quality'.

The quality of output is not, of course, the same thing, though linked, but the RAE uses the one to judge the other, reinforcing the view recorded above on the importance of presentation of work. There is a cautionary note on this distinction: whereas two thirds (of staff) think their own output has improved, only just over one third (34 per cent) think that the RAE has improved the quality of research work in higher education overall. This disparity is a regular feature of surveys such as ours. (McNay, 1997: 31)

Finally, there was substantial support for the view that the RAE had increased stress and instituted a sense of 'anomie' amongst academics who feel that the process of research has become more 'mechanistic and inhumane' and that managerial direction of research

activities evidenced as a result of the RAE, has weakened their autonomy (McNay, 1997).

The alienation of academics from their research work is expressed more forcefully by Harvie (2000) who, writing from a Marxist perspective, argues that the intrinsic creative value of research for academics has been replaced by a pressure to maximise the RAE-value of their research so that 'the researcher exchanges their product for RAE-value and through this mechanism of exchange becomes alienated from the product' (Harvie, 2000: 112). Harvie (2000) expresses the concern that academics in seeking to maximise the RAE-value of their products will try to publish in the 'highest ranking journals' and journals of 'lesser value' for the RAE.

The alienation of academics is further explored by examining the labour power of academics, the selling of one's ability to work as well as the products of one's labour. Harvie argues that a distinction can be drawn between research workers and research capitalists. Research capitalists, in having accumulated research capital in the form of high ranking publications and research grants, are able to employ the labour of research workers (or proletarians) who in return for their creative labour power receive little recognition (although this may vary between different situations), and substantially decreased levels of job security<sup>7</sup> and may remain trapped in a 'research-proletarian' position through their inability to accumulate sufficient research capital whilst the research capitalist substantially increases his research capital and thus his research power.

(the research capitalist) is able to employ a large number of research workers, who not only do the bulk of the research work, but whose job also includes writing new research proposals, under the direction of the research capitalist, to fund the next project and most likely to secure their own future employment. In such a way the research capitalist is able to accumulate a vast number of publications and control huge resources. With their extensive CV this person is likely to gain widespread authority within their discipline, through editorship of key journals or positions on funding councils, say, and is thus able to have disproportionate influence over its future direction. With their control of significant monetary resources, they will wield significant power within their own department and university, therefore, challenging the established hierarchy of heads of departments, deans and so on. Of course, research capitalists may simultaneously be heads of department, but this doesn't affect the argument - after all, some feudal lords became successful capitalists. (Harvie, 2000: 115)

Harvie's main thesis is that the academics from the old system of 'intellectual commons' (akin to collegiality), as he terms it, where research facilities and well endowed libraries were available to all alongside the freedom from too much teaching or administration, are being replaced or usurped by the 'research capitalists'. There is, however, little supporting empirical evidence within Harvie's work and, although he recognises that this process may be uneven, he provides no analysis of differences across the sector, within institutions and departments. He also give an inadvertently 'golden age' picture of the 'intellectual commons' as the context of working conditions for academics in the past. Furthermore, his definition of accumulating research capital applies primarily to the research capitalists since he rejects an individualist definition of this such as that used by Bourdieu, instead defining it as an ability to harness the labour power of others. I would argue that this over-simplifies the situation within academia and that Bourdieu's original use of the idea of accumulation of different forms of capital affords a more insightful analysis (Bourdieu, 1988). Harvie (2000) may be right to highlight the changing conditions of capital accumulation among academics but this must be addressed by

analysing the complexity of this situation across different institutions and within different disciplines.

Harvie's account does raise significant debates, especially those concerning the academic labour process and the production of academic knowledge within the current conditions of higher education. These issues have been explored through empirical investigation by researchers writing on specific academic disciplines (Harley and Lee, 1997), (Sidaway, 1997). Harley and Lowe (1998), for example, study a variety of disciplines including psychology, sociology, marketing and accounting in an attempt to understand the academic labour process within higher education. They argue that the RAE has been central to the commodification of academic labour and the growth of managerialism within higher education which has led to an unacceptable intensification of academic labour and increasing managerial surveillance and control (Harley and Lowe, 1998).

The study, which was based on interviews with academics, echoes many of the findings of McNay's reports on the negative and, to some degree, positive impacts of the RAE. The RAE was seen to have been a positive influence on the improvement of research work. At the very least this would include the organisation and visibility of research. Evidence of younger members or staff being given more teaching and administration and a reinforcement of the academic-practitioner divide was cited. There also seemed to be an interesting tension between the concept of competition and co-operation within academia. Although the RAE may serve as one amongst many initiatives to increase competition between academics, both within and between institutions, there seems to be a sense that

the identification of individuals with their department and institutions has become stronger. This identification with one's institution, however, may be encouraged more by fear of negative reprisals than by genuine community spirit.

...through the periodic research assessment exercise, academics have been made individually responsible not only for their own fate but also that of their colleagues and their performance has been monitored in a brutally public way. The objective need to ensure a high rating could lead to long periods of subjective uncertainty and angst for those whose personal identity as a researcher was in doubt. (Harley and Lowe, 1998: 20)

The RAE, therefore, is perceived to have a direct link with career prospects and is seen to challenge the autonomy and identity of academics by forcing them to submit to managerial aims within the institution and direct their research labour to meeting the ends dictated by the RAE. As well as the negative impact of the RAE on academic labour, there is also the question of whether the RAE has had an impact on the type of research carried out within university departments. Harley and Lee (1997) researching the discipline of economics argue that within this discipline at least there is a perceived pressure to move towards the mainstream. They maintain that the narrow definition of excellence put forward within the RAE and 'the continued dominance of a central analytic core' of mainstream, neo-classical economics resulting from the control over the reputational system by the leadership, has meant an increase in mainstream economics to the detriment of non mainstream economics, including Marxian and Post-Keynesian. Those academics surveyed in the study also expressed concern that the list of 'key journals', mostly within mainstream economics, which are highly valued for the RAE will serve to dominate and direct research towards the mainstream and away from non

mainstream economics (Harley and Lee, 1997). The study shows, however, that this tendency is uneven across different institutions and different disciplines so cannot be taken as a general one across the sector. Economics departments who were rated as a two or three 'were those where academics, both main and non mainstream felt under most pressure to conform to its perceived demands' (Harley and Lee, 1997). Similarly, they argue that other social science disciplines such as sociology have a low degree of academic control over the reputational system and therefore have a broader set of approaches and competing aims.

Further studies within specific disciplines such as geography also found a perception amongst academics that there has been an overall intensification of work and reinforcement of a division of labour within their departments. This was seen, however, to be an uneven process across geography departments. Similarly, a case is made that the uneven intensification of hierarchies and authority structures within a discipline, although maintained, is to some degree made more dynamic since the hierarchies are now overt (Sidaway, 1997). In his interviews with geographers, Sidaway (1997) found a profound shift in the 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1980) of academic work. These changes are not easily defined and are not necessarily related specifically to the RAE, although this appears to feature prominently in interviews, but to an amalgam of wider structural changes and forms of discourse. 'Thatcherism, 'flexibility', 'precariousness' - these terms invoke a sense of change or transition' (Sidaway, 1997).

The empirical work done on the impacts of the research assessment exercise is on the whole atheoretical, and its intention is primarily to raise awareness of the significant impacts of this policy change on university departments and perhaps advocate modifications to the RAE or its abolition. Exceptions to this are Harvie (2000), writing from a Marxist perspective, and Harley and Lee (1997) who work within labour process theory. It is important that further research on universities be more clearly embedded within a theoretical approach and show more concern for wider social and economic forces serving to influence higher education. Similarly there should be a more integrated and diverse use of methodology with this research since the work to date has concentrated primarily on questionnaire surveys. These surveys are of undoubted value but they are limited in terms of the extent to which they illuminate institutional processes and their relationship to the practices of academics. Perceptions are gleaned, for example, that universities have become more managerial and that academics are spending more time on research. Despite the recognition by researchers that the relationship between these two things (institution and individual) is not a simple one of cause and effect, but is mediated through differences between institutions and differences between disciplines, there is little research that shows this to be the case.

Three main areas of importance in relation to the RAE and its impacts on universities emerge clearly from the empirical research discussed. Firstly, institutional processes and the extent to which they have become more managerial. Secondly, changes to the production and content of knowledge within specific disciplines. Thirdly, changes to the

form and process of academic work. These issues will be further explored within this thesis.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The specific aims and ideals for the new polytechnics can be explored in a variety of publications, the most informative of the government intentions was written by Robinson (Robinson, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education (1956) Technical Education: HMSO

<sup>3</sup> Committee on Higher Education (1963) Higher Education CMND. 2154 London: HMSO

<sup>4</sup> CVCP (1985) Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities, London: CVCP

<sup>5</sup> During an interview with a Pro Vice Chancellor at a pre 1992 university, he expressed a concern that institutions which received moderate ratings in the RAE served as a training ground for good researchers who, when their work was being recognised and valued, would desire to move up the university hierarchy and be attracted by offers from more highly rated institutions.

<sup>6</sup> The scholarship of integration would include the writing of textbooks and the interpretation of the discipline for the wider community. The scholarship of service would include the practical application of knowledge.

<sup>7</sup> A research Concordat has been introduced in order to improve working conditions for researchers within higher education.



## CHAPTER TWO

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### **The Differentiated Academic Profession: institutional and disciplinary locations**

‘Quite so, sir, quite so. You will have your joke, I see. So you reject all that? Very well. So you only believe in Science?’

‘I have already explained to you that I don’t believe in anything: and what is science - science in the abstract? There are sciences, as there are trades and professions, but abstract science just doesn’t exist.’ (Turgenev, Ivan Fathers and Sons)

The research work on the impacts of the RAE, discussed in the previous chapter, raised important and illuminating questions about the changing direction of academic work in universities. However, there are significant shortcomings in this research, the most important of which is the weakness of its theoretical or conceptual background. Evidence indicated that the RAE had profound implications for disciplinary organisation of knowledge production; institutional organisation of research activities and academic work; and the academic profession and academic value system. However, there is little attempt to provide some theoretical or conceptual basis for what is meant by ‘disciplinary organisation’, ‘institutional organisation’ and the ‘academic profession’ within this literature.

This chapter will address this imbalance by exploring evidence from the wider literature on academic communities and the academic profession. Firstly, questions will be raised

concerning the differences in disciplinary organisation in terms of practices and values. How can we define a 'discipline' and what are the implications, if any, of the social organisation of disciplines for the production of knowledge? Secondly, the institutional organisation of universities will be addressed. Evidence from empirical research given in the previous chapter suggests that universities have become more 'managerial' and less 'collegial' (Harley and Lee, 1997). It is important to explore what these concepts mean both in a generic sense as well as in terms of how they apply to specific organisational processes within universities. Finally, the idea of an 'academic profession' will be explored and questions will be addressed concerning the organisation of academic work and the practices and values that are deemed to be integral to the profession.

### **The Disciplinary Organisation of Knowledge Production**

When the focus is narrowed to particular disciplines or groups of disciplines, it becomes immediately obvious that one domain, the natural sciences, has been very thoroughly studied at the expense of the rest. Why the cultural analysis of science should have attracted so much attention, and the cultural analysis of history, philosophy, or economics so little, is a question that seems to deserve more attention than it has been given. (Becher, 1987: 173)

Becher is correct to argue that in comparison to research done on scientific communities there is relatively little work on the organisational and cultural aspects of other disciplinary communities either within the humanities (such as History or English) or within the social sciences (such as Economics or Sociology or applied disciplines such as

Business Studies or Technology). Despite exceptions to this (Ennis, 1992; Evans, 1993), there is a remarkable absence of literature in this area.

The sociology of science, on the other hand, has produced a lot of research, and there is no shortage of citations of studies done on scientific research communities. This area of research is extremely wide ranging but I would like to give an introductory overview of some of the key scholars and arguments associated with this field, in order to lay the foundations for some of the main issues and questions which are relevant to my study.

The study of the sociology of knowledge began with the work of Karl Mannheim (Mannheim, 1952), and the founding father of its sub-discipline the sociology of science and/or the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), is Robert K. Merton (Merton, 1973; Merton, 1996). The sociology of knowledge outlined by Mannheim was concerned with the effect of the social world on the world of ideas. Or, as Berger (1996) claims, the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the basic epistemological question of how we come to know and define 'reality'.

In other words, a 'sociology of knowledge' will have to deal not only with the empirical variety of 'knowledge' in human societies, but also with the processes by which any body of 'knowledge' comes to be socially established as 'reality'. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 15)

Leaving aside the complex issue of establishing a sense of 'reality', the enduring influence of scientific work on what has been accepted as legitimate knowledge within society is more than apparent. It is most likely for this reason that much sociological

investigation has focused on this area of research work (to the exclusion of other academic disciplines).

The sociology of science is a vast research area but for present purposes some of its main concerns can be summarised as follows: the social nature of science (Merton, 1996); how scientific knowledge is produced and legitimated, including the growth and 'development' of scientific knowledge (Crane, 1972); scientific communities and cultures (Mulkay, 1991); and the process and practice of research within the laboratory setting (Lynch, 1985), (Latour and Woolgar, 1979). The theoretical and methodological perspectives which inform the sociology of science and scientific knowledge are radically diverse. I shall refer briefly to each of these areas of research in order to demonstrate the variety of work in this area.

Merton's (1973) earliest work in the sociology of science was broadly within a functionalist perspective and was interested in how the scientific community functioned as a coherent group. He posited a kind of 'ethos of science' in the form of a set of cultural rules and norms which served to unite a rather diverse community of scientists from different disciplines (Physics, Biology, Chemistry etc... and he would include the social sciences). These norms are: communalism, universalism, disinterestedness, originality and organised scepticism. These norms provide a set of rules and procedures to guide the action of individuals within the community of scientists, ensuring that their work: serves the benefit of the community as a whole; is concerned with finding the 'truth'; is not contaminated by individual or outside group interests; is not a copy of previous work and

finally that all new work produced should be treated sceptically until subjected to scrutiny within the community.

In a refinement of Merton's position, Mulkay (1991) conducted a study in the 1970s within a physics department, in a Canadian university, in order to investigate the way in which 'the reward system within the scientific profession structures activities within (academic) departments' (Mulkay, 1991). Based on this detailed empirical work of one physics department he shows how the norms outlined by Merton can be seen to operate through the practices of individual scientists within this department. For example, he argues that the norm of originality is adhered to in the work of scientists when they attempt where possible to reduce any possibility that other scientists could anticipate their work. This was achieved mainly by ensuring direct communication with other scientists working in the same field.<sup>1</sup> However, the competitive environment of scientific enquiry may mean that the possibility of open communication is difficult. Similarly, Mulkay argues that other norms such as that of 'organised scepticism' are not played out in the daily practices of scientists.

According to Storer... 'The scientist is obligated... by this norm to make public his criticism of the work of others when he believes it to be in error'. Our findings do indicate a slight tendency for organised scepticism to exist as a norm. But even more conclusively they show that the norm had little influence upon the actual behaviour of our respondents... The vast majority of papers are not subjected to critical scrutiny. The information they contain is either extracted from the journals by interested researchers or it is ignored. (Mulkay, 1991: 46)

The attempt by Merton and others to define a set of scientific norms governing the social organisation of the behaviour of scientists proved to be somewhat elusive and certainly

more complex than originally suggested. Indeed, a further body of work in the sociology of science, pioneered by sociologists such as Bruno Latour (Latour and Woolgar, 1979) begins not by constructing an overarching social and cultural framework for scientific study but conversely begins from the micro-level of analysis within the laboratory. What is being studied here is not the idea of social rules and norms governing the whole of the scientific community but more concretely how the micro social processes govern the day to day activities within scientific laboratories. The focus of this kind of research is not on the means by which the legitimacy of scientific knowledge is ordained by the scientific community but more on how little pieces of 'factual' knowledge are constructed daily within the laboratory.

Indeed, one way of situating the Latourian framework within sociological traditions would be to see it as unwinding the solution of a social-order problem which Parsons proffered... All these effects of enrolling, controlling and invigilating. Latourian social order appears all natural fact and no moral fact. Therefore, the onus on those who suspect the adequacy of Hobbesian accounts of order would be to produce a post-Mertonian picture of the moral economies of science - the locally distributed conceptions of legitimacy, authority and trust by which scientific knowledge comes to be a collective good, the moral-pragmatic preconditions for intersubjectivity, and the mundane means by which moral orders of scientific knowledge-making come to be distributed around the world. (Shapin, 1995: 304)

The methodologies used in the studies on the sociology of science are diverse, ranging from interviews with scientists (Mulkay, 1991) to observational work in the laboratories (Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Lynch, 1985). However, different methodologies are also used by the same researchers at different times in their careers to achieve highly varied perspectives on the social construction of scientific knowledge. Mulkay (1991) for example, describes the changing focus of his research on the sociology of science as a

‘sociological pilgrimage’, an apt metaphor for an extensive research journey from the early 80s through to the late 90s. He moves through a series of phases from the ‘conventional analysis’ (described above in the study of the Canadian physics department) to ‘discourse analysis’ and finally, to ‘new literary forms’. This transition is interesting in terms of the changing perspectives of a single sociologist and in terms of the way in which the focus of sociological studies of science has changed in the last 20-30 years.

During his discourse analysis phase in the early 80s, Mulkay (1991) argues that accounts given by scientists (primarily during interviews) of their working practices cannot be taken as descriptions of action but instead the sociologist must analyse these accounts as a means of understanding how scientists construct their social world (Mulkay, 1991). He points to the inconsistencies often found within interviews.

...the same person may call it a political manoeuvre on one occasion and a disinterested act performed out of duty on another occasion. There is thus no way you can get from this collection of incompatible statements to a conclusion about action, unless you can find some way of sorting out reliable assertions from participants from unreliable assertions. (Mulkay, 1991: 19)

This important issue raised by Mulkay is relevant to the present study and will be discussed in more detail within the methodology section. In terms of the development of Mulkay’s research, however, his assertion that the accounts of scientists could not be taken at face value was then turned around in a reflexive manner on the practising pseudo-scientific sociologist. There was no point, he claimed in his later work, in attempting to investigate the inconsistencies of the scientists’ accounts of their action,

when the sociological text used to present it simply conformed to a realist narrative.

Mulkay thereafter sought to experiment with different forms of textuality and means of representing sociological findings that upset the traditional academic textual format. He produced scientific 'characters' and set them within a theatrical play, giving them dialogue. This was intended to deconstruct the act of construction of 'reality' achieved by the sociologist using realist narrative text.<sup>2</sup>

Interesting and provocative as Mulkay's work is, the question of how one is able to talk about the scientific world with any certainty is blurred. The work of Latour and other ethnomethodologists in describing the everyday life of the scientists in the laboratory similarly ends with an inability to talk authoritatively about the scientific life. As one critic argues:

..., ethnomethodology, like strands of (sociology of scientific knowledge) SSK, has commended ever more finely grained studies of day-to-day scientific practice. It has been a major inspiration to work displaying the mundane and everyday character of knowledge-making, while, on a programmatic level, it has expressed doubt that sociologists currently possess the conceptual resources to explain or even schematically to describe scientific order. (Shapin, 1995: 312)

The work of Pierre Bourdieu that will be discussed in the following chapter suggests possible alternatives to the development of the sociology of science down a postmodernist route of 'textual' reflexivity. Before extending the debate, however, it is necessary to widen the arguments by introducing work which steps outside the boundaries of science to address other disciplines and forms of knowledge within academia.



In his book entitled 'Academic Tribes and Territories: intellectual enquiry and the cultures of the disciplines', Becher (1989) addresses the issue of the extent to which the social aspects of knowledge communities are conditioned by the respective epistemological properties of the knowledge forms of each community. He presents a detailed examination of the social processes and properties which characterise different research communities, including patterns of communication, procedures of inclusion and exclusion and social networks. He then attempts to assess the extent to which the specific epistemological concerns of each community affect the social interaction of its members. For example, Becher characterises the social and cognitive levels of contrasting knowledge communities in the following way: cognitive level described as hard/soft and/or pure applied and the social level described as convergent/divergent and/or urban/rural.

The hard/soft distinction refers to the extent to which a discipline is seen to employ rigorous scientific methods and pure/applied refers to the extent to which a discipline is characterised as being primarily theoretical or practical in focus. The convergent/divergent distinction on the social level refers to the degree of social and cultural cohesion of a community and the urban/rural dichotomy refers primarily to the number of people working on a particular research area ('urban' research areas have a high people to problem ratio and 'rural' areas a low ratio). This dimension also impacts on the communication practices and publication rates of the different communities (individuals within 'urban' research areas tend to publish quickly and there is intense

rivalry between competitors whereas individuals within 'rural' research areas publish at a slower pace and are less likely to have many competitors).

Becher's research is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, his research deals with the socio-cultural dimension of knowledge production, and there have been few attempts outside the sociology of science to characterise the social and cultural world of academic research communities. Secondly, he focuses not only on science but on other disciplines such as, for example, Economics, History, Geography and Sociology (Becher, 1989). Finally, he attempts to show how the specific epistemological, i.e cognitive aims of the disciplines influence the social characteristics of these research communities in terms of their patterns of communication and social networks. This is a reversal of the aims of research done within the sociology of science whereby the direction of influence is seen to be the other way round and the social features of knowledge production are deemed to influence not only the way in which research is conducted and the types of problems pursued but also what becomes classified as legitimate knowledge within the scientific community and society in general.

Becher concentrates on the 'discipline' as the primary focus of differences between academic communities. Disciplines can be defined by their conceptual tools, by their methods, theories and concepts as organised knowledge forms or equally they can be defined as organised social groupings (Becher, 1989). The interesting question for Becher is the interaction between these two things and more precisely the expression of these disciplinary communities both in structural and cultural form. Becher's analysis becomes

more concerned with the complexity of research specialisms within disciplines that determine the social community of researchers outside the institution.

As a rough approximation, it might be said that disciplines take institutional shape in departments, and that specialisms are less formally recognisable in terms of organised professional groupings, dedicated journals and bibliographical categories. However, some specialisms cover such a broad span of knowledge that it becomes useful or necessary to subdivide them... Such subspecialisms are harder to identify, being variously associated with 'social circles', 'networks', 'invisible colleges' and other comparable notions. (Becher, 1989: 45)

The concept of an 'invisible college' comes from the work of Crane (1972) and her study of the how scientific communities influence the growth of knowledge. Using a questionnaire survey and making detailed study of bibliographies, Crane was able to investigate the social networks of two disciplinary specialisms, one from Mathematics and one from Sociology. Using these two research areas as case studies, Crane was able to study the social development alongside the intellectual development of these groups. She identified four stages in the growth of a research area<sup>3</sup> and also provided the key characteristics of what she termed a 'solidarity group', e.g. it has developed radically new approaches to the field of study; has a clearly defined style of work, no difficulty in recruiting members, and activities are centred on one or two institutions where leading members reside (Crane, 1972).

Becher also comes to realise the complexity of determining social units of analysis of research areas within disciplines and the difficulty of understanding their social configurations as the networks become more 'invisible'. Furthermore, in terms of applying the four dimensional taxonomy of pure/applied, hard/soft, convergent/divergent

and urban/rural, he finds they are better placed as much within disciplines as across them. Some disciplines he found easy to place on either side of the dichotomy such as Physics, Chemistry, Pharmacy and Mathematics which were considered 'hard'; History and Sociology were 'soft'; and Biology occupied an intermediary position with Microbiology considered 'hard' and Ecology 'soft'. In terms of looking at the social dimension there is equal uncertainty as to the side of the dichotomy on which specific disciplines fall. Both Biology and Law are difficult to place as their diverse specialisms make the subject divergent to some extent but also, in the case of Biology, they display a form of 'intellectual unity' which implies more convergence (Becher, 1989).

What Becher's research implies is that the social aspects of disciplinary communities are far from easy to characterise within a simple taxonomy. With ever decreasing circles the specialisms and research areas grow and decline at different intervals. The difficulties of identifying these 'invisible colleges' only makes the task more difficult (Crane, 1972). Beyond these methodological difficulties, Becher's work has been criticised for being epistemologically essentialist (i.e. applying too much explanatory power to the epistemological frameworks of discipline) and for claiming to provide descriptions of the 'empirical reality' of academic research cultures (Trowler, 1998).

These and other critiques will be addressed later in the chapter. Before finishing this section, however, I will discuss the current literature which prophesies a new means of knowledge production transcending the disciplinary organisation of knowledge production (Gibbons, 1994) or alternatively, the 'end of knowledge' (Delanty, 1997).

Becher's insistence on the primacy of the discipline as an organising feature of academic communities is challenged in the work of Gibbons et al (1994), who argue that societal conditions are set for a 'new production of knowledge' where *transdisciplinarity* is one key feature. Gibbons et al. (1994) argue that we are moving from a mode 1 production of knowledge to mode 2. Mode 1 is generated within a disciplinary, primarily cognitive context whereas mode 2 is created within broader social and economic contexts. Thus the key features of mode 2 production of knowledge are:

- knowledge produced in the context of application
- transdisciplinarity
- heterogeneity and organisational diversity
- social accountability and reflexivity
- quality control

Gibbons et al argue that broader socio-economic and socio-cultural changes, whether characterised as Postfordism/Postindustrialism or Postmodernism, have instigated the demand for a mode 2 production of knowledge. This new mode of knowledge production not only questions the disciplinary organisation of knowledge production but also implies that universities may no longer be the primary location for research activity. The idea that change in the production of knowledge has undergone a major transformation has been criticised both for its conceptual basis and for its premature optimism (Fuller, 1995).

Gibbons et al expend so much effort on showing how 'Mode 2' knowledge production marks a break from the discipline-based, normal-scientific 'Mode 1' that they are hard pressed to admit that 'Mode 1' is itself little more than an ideal type, one whose likelihood of being superseded is only matched by its unlikelihood of ever having existed. (Fuller, 1995: 165)

He argues further that, "mode 2 is less the permeation of industrial society by knowledge-based values and more the permeation of knowledge based communities by industrial values" (Fuller, 1995). Delanty (1997) tends to concur with this sentiment as he argues, following Lyotard (1984), that knowledge (or the production of it) is no longer autonomous but, as a consequence of new 'audit cultures' and 'regulatory regimes' (which would also include the RAE), is forced to be productive (Delanty, 1997). This productivity is presumed on the needs and demands of the wider social and economic concerns of society. Disciplinary cultures cannot be seen as separate, autonomous enclaves governed solely by consensual norms such as the scientific norms posited by Merton. They are subject to wider socio-cultural and economic influences. Furthermore, despite the claims to the contrary by mode 2 enthusiasts, the primary site of knowledge production is the university. Changes to the organisation of disciplinary knowledge production, therefore, is always also situated within changing institutional circumstances. 'Regulatory regimes' are mediated through institutional processes so the organisation of higher education institutions must be studied alongside disciplinary organisation in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of structural features of knowledge production and research activities.

## **Institutional Organisation and Practices within Academia**

...one international group, studying 'the entrepreneurial and adaptive university' at Anglia Polytechnic University's Centre for Higher Education Management, visited Cambridge (University) in 1994. They asked about the research committee - 'we haven't got one'; research policy - 'it's a good thing'; control of quality? - 'we appoint top class staff and let them get on with it'; allocation of funds? - 'there is little held centrally for distribution. As one Cambridge Don summed up: 'Cambridge works in practice but not in theory.' (McNay, 1995: 108)

In the previous chapter, I outlined one possible model of the organisation of the university system within the U.K. Comparison was made between the 'old' and 'new' university sector in terms of their patterns of governance, primarily in relation to collegial and managerial forms of organisation. In this section I will concentrate on literature that addresses the organisational and value structures within institutions and explore the concepts of both collegiality and managerialism in more detail, alongside other models of university organisation and forms of authority and decision-making.

Before looking at other models of university organisation I will review a number of attempts to characterise the 'collegial' model by moving beyond the purely anecdotal anarchic characterisation that is given in the quotation from McNay above. The collegial model, which may or may not represent a version of the 'reality' of university governance as it exists in the modern university, is certainly seen as a powerful normative vision of how universities should be run (Becher and Kogan, 1992).

The college system of university organisation exhibited by Oxford and Cambridge is the starting place for an understanding of the meaning of the 'collegial' model. These

universities represent a particular system of 1) university governance, 2) the organisation of buildings, space and functions, and 3) relationships between academic colleagues (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998). These two universities, according to Tapper and Palfreyman (1998) have a 'confederal' model of governance with a sovereign body, such as the Congregation at Oxford. The power of sovereignty lies however in the collectivity of the Dons. Administrative powers are rotated, and all members are required to take on these responsibilities and to take part in all committees. Decision-making must be conducted in committees and must involve all participants. Bush (1998) defines this as 'pure' collegiality as distinct from 'restricted' collegiality that would involve power being shared by only a few senior colleagues. He maintains that "Informal consultations with staff do not constitute collegiality. Where heads seek the advice of colleagues before making a decision the process is one of consultation whereas the essence of collegiality is participation in decision-making" (Bush, 1998: 69). Within a 'pure' collegial model in the Oxbridge tradition there would be no seniority but all participants would share equal status. "All Dons were college fellows and no more or less" (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998: 152).

It could be argued that the normative imperative of the 'collegial' model has a great influence on the organisation of universities, whether this be in terms of the social or organisational structure. The extent to which a common set of values can ever be assumed or that decision-making within institutions is conflict free, however, is questionable. If the 'collegial' model is a reality within the modern university, or indeed ever has been, then it



may be in the more ‘restricted’ form or it may be one model among many which can be used to describe a complex organisation.

Table 2.1: Components of the ideal model of collegiality

- 
1. Normative democratic principles
  2. Involves professional staff with an authority of expertise
  3. Assumption of a common set of values
  4. Size of decision-making groups (if numbers are too large then there is a possibility of *formal representation* for all members).
  5. Assumption that decisions are reached by consensus rather than division or conflict
- 

Source: Bush (1998) Collegial Models

In his appraisal of different models of university organisation, Walford (1987) divides them into three categories: models that stress rationality; models that stress ambiguity; and political and interactionist models. The ‘collegial’ model outlined above would be designated within this scheme as a rational model, primarily since it “presents a view that university objectives are clear and consensual” (Walford, 1987: 129). The other rational model he discusses is the ‘bureaucratic’ one which, following Weber (1947), is defined as a “network of social groups dedicated to limited goals and organised for maximum efficiency” where “the regulation of the system is based on the principle of ‘legal-rationality’, as contrasted with informal regulation based on friendship, loyalty to family, or personal allegiance to a charismatic leader” (Walford, 1987: 130).

The political model of university organisation dispels any idea of consensual and common aims and the possibility of a rational and regulated system. Baldrige (1974) in his study of New York University at a time of institutional crisis argues that the university is like a political system whereby everyone is divided along specific lines of interest and that people take part in decision making only in so far as it directly affects their particular concerns. In contrast to the collegial and bureaucratic models, conflict is seen as normal within an institution; the social structure is perceived as plural rather than unitary; and decision-making is by negotiation and bargaining (Baldrige, 1971). Despite criticisms that this particular model was developed during a specific time of crisis within one university (Walford, 1987) and may not therefore reflect university organisation at other times, I would argue that this conflict model is a useful tool of analysis for looking at the current university system in Britain. This model will be discussed further in relation to the work of Bourdieu in the following chapter.

Walford (1987) also discusses what he terms 'models that stress ambiguity'. By this he means models of university organisation within which decision-making is not rational or consensual but is more ad hoc and less certain of outcomes and possibilities. Decision makers find their answers in a 'garbage can' where "...the sequence of actions is not predetermined and there is a discontinuous flow of problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities with no necessarily logical...relationship" (Walford, 1987: 133).

By contrast, rather than attempt to characterise university organisation using one model, Becher and Kogan (1992) provide an analysis of British university organisation as a

plurality of decision making frameworks and organisational processes. Furthermore, they separate both the normative and operational processes within the university into different levels: the individual; the basic unit (department or school); the institution and the central authority. At each of these levels, therefore, they analyse the organisational practices and decision making processes and they find a mixture of hierarchical and collegial forms of organisation. A good example of this is the role of the Vice Chancellor, whom they describe as 'Janus-like':

Institutional leaders have dual expectations placed on them. In the traditional mode of working they are responsible for making sure that the institution sustains and, where possible develops itself. Accordingly they have to account for the way in which it runs, both to its dominantly lay council or governing body and... the central authorities... At the same time they must mediate among strongly idiosyncratic academics whose pre-eminence in their own professional spheres is likely to be among the institution's most important assets. The university vice chancellor or polytechnic director has thus always been, at one and the same time, required to be a leader but the first among equals within the institution... (Becher and Kogan, 1992: 69)

In analysing the complexity of organisation process not just between institutions but also within them, therefore, Becher and Kogan (1992) provide a useful framework for studying individual universities. In this study, the main focus is the university department, but this will be examined in the context of the whole institutional framework (as well as the university system) and changing policy contexts. Their analysis is heavily reliant on the taxonomy of hard/soft and pure/applied etc. to help explain the normative and operational processes of basic units (departments). For example, they argue that 'hard, pure' basic units are heavily reliant on material resources and that 'soft, pure' basic units tend to be

more individual than collective in character and “the scale of research is modest” (Becher and Kogan, 1992: 91).

Becher and Kogan (1992) argue that to a great extent, “...the norms and operations of basic units (departments) are dependent on the nature of the knowledge field with which it is concerned” and further, “a basic unit’s (department’s) standing within the academic world as a whole, as well as within the host institution, will also be affected by the nature of the knowledge field with which it is concerned.” (Becher and Kogan, 1992: 92).

Becher has been criticised for submitting to epistemological essentialism which places too much emphasis on disciplinary features to explain academic cultures and forms of organisation (Trowler, 1998). To some extent this is true since, for example, there is little analysis of the social organisation within departments not connected to disciplinary organisation, e.g. decision-making processes. However, Becher and Kogan (1992) do provide an important analytical framework for studying the interconnections of these two dimensions, discipline and department. Furthermore, they concentrate on the status afforded to individual departments based on their position within institutional and academic hierarchies. These issues will be taken up and discussed further in the next chapter.

Between the organisation of the discipline and the organisation of the institution, however, there is the vital connecting link of the ‘academic’. Does an ‘academic profession exist at all’? If so, does studying the ‘academic profession’ help to answer

questions about the relative importance of institutional and disciplinary affiliation? It is to these questions that I will now turn.

### **The Academic Profession: the end of academic ‘vocation’?**

So the prestige of academic people in the eyes of both the politician and the populace has plummeted. There is a short-term and real meaning to be attached to the decline of donnish dominion in Britain since the middle of the twentieth century. We have sadly portrayed deteriorating conditions of intellectual work. The autonomy of institutions has declined, salaries have fallen, chances of promotion have decreased. The dignity of academic people and their universities and polytechnics has been assailed from without by government and from within by the corrosion of bureaucracy. Dons themselves have largely ceased to recommend the academic succession to their own students. They see themselves as an occupational group losing its long-established privileges of tenure and self-government, pressed to dilute its tutorial methods, hampered in control of syllabuses, and restricted in its research ambitions by chronic shortages of funds. And these worsened conditions are not simply the outcome of justified pressure to raise the educational standards of the majority of the populace - that after all is a central concern of the key profession - but also, and above all, the melancholy consequences of disapprobation. (Halsey, 1995: 268)

Much of the current literature on the academic profession within the UK is embedded in the discourse of ‘change’ and ‘crisis’ (Halsey, 1995; Miller, 1995; Parker and Jary, 1994; Trowler, 1998). Successive government policies, including, severe budget cuts to universities, rapid growth in student numbers, the ending of the binary divide, and the imposition of ‘quality’ assurance measures and significantly for this work, the introduction of the RAE, have been analysed in relation to the impact on life and work within higher education institutions (see Chapter One).

Within all of this literature is a lament for a past that has been lost and the changed 'structure of feeling' of academia (Sidaway, 1997). Managerialism has eroded the collegial community, weakened professional control structures and changed the working conditions of academics at the same time as fundamentally altering the subjective experience of their work and the meanings attached to it (Parker and Jary, 1994).

The organisation and differentiation of disciplines and the organisation and increasing hierarchization of universities have been discussed, but is it possible to talk of an 'academic profession' or an 'academic' culture which transcends the separation of biologists from psychologists and academics at the University of Birmingham from academics at the University of North London? In order to understand the perception of what has been lost, it is necessary to explore firstly, the possibility of characterising an 'academic' and the idea of a unified 'academic profession'.

Scott's (1983) article 'The State of the Academic Profession in Britain', argues that the British academic profession is uniquely homogeneous and demonstrates a distinct solidarity. In order to present this case, he explores four defining characteristics of the British academic profession. Firstly, he claims that there is a considerable equality of privileges and influence between senior and junior staff. Secondly, there is a lack of any significant division of labour between teachers and researchers so that all are more or less equally involved in both activities. Thirdly, Scott points to the relative absence of any serious stratification of institutions. Finally he maintains that there is a "remarkable

homogeneity of intellectual and broader cultural values within the profession” (Scott, 1983: 245).

With regard to the homogeneity of academic values, Scott lists a number of key ideas that he believes unite the academic profession. These refer to undergraduate education (how this should be done), the centrality of the collegial structure in higher education, the importance of the ‘cultural’ dimension of higher education and the location of higher education institutions within modern society. He does not elaborate on the precise meaning that these values have for academics and there is no empirical evidence that may further illuminate the meanings of these particular values. However, he maintains that this ‘exceptional solidarity’ and uniformity of the academic profession in Britain is primarily explained by the significant degree of autonomy afforded the universities by the government, led in part by the firm belief in academic freedom. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ‘rise of donnish dominion’ between the wars had produced an academic profession supported but not controlled by government, democratic in its organisation and homogeneous in its professional values and aspirations.

Scott (1983) concedes, however, that structural changes were having an impact on this homogeneity such that, for example, the employment of more part time and contract members of staff was eroding the equality of privileges and influence of all members of staff. Equally changes being made to funding of research were affecting the involvement of all staff in research as well as teaching. He maintains that despite these structural changes a strong element of solidarity remains within the profession. Further, he

acknowledges differences between the university and polytechnic sector in organisation where, for example, promotion within universities was based primarily on academic merit (research and publication) whereas in the polytechnics individuals could advance in the profession by climbing the administrative hierarchy (Scott, 1983).

Scott (1983) also describes an exceptional paradox within the relationship between the academic profession and the government paymasters, which he describes as 'the exceptional autonomy enjoyed by British higher education' and equally 'the almost as exceptional degree of solidarity between higher education and political society' (Scott, 1983: 249). This mutually reinforcing relationship between higher education institutions and the state was partly explained by what he maintains to be the unique pragmatism of the British intellectual tradition which '...meant that the forms of knowledge produced by the early modern university were not seen as at all dangerous or subversive but as an essential support for an industrialising society' (Scott, 1983: 249). As a result the universities were afforded substantial autonomy for they could be trusted to pursue academic activities conducive to the needs of government and the wider society. This characterisation of the British academic profession as conformist is echoed by Halsey (1992):

This conservatism reflects in part the distinctive character of secure attachment to the state and the social order which has earned the description of the British 'key' profession as pragmatic and useful - a ready servant of government administration and industrial need. (Halsey, 1995: 247)



British academics have never fulfilled the role of 'critical intellectuals', as was the case in other European countries. The anti-intellectualism which was and still is a part of British culture pervades also the academy. British academics had a role of 'cultural endorsers' rather than as critics of the dominant culture, according to Barnett (1997) whereby if the 'academics of Victorian England understood that they had an intellectual role (and they did), it was to inform the citizenry about the world as it was coming to be understood. Public lectures were a form of extramural liberal education, of public enlightenment rather than of public liberation or emancipation in a radical sense.' (Barnett, 1997: 148).

Halsey (1995) agrees with this diagnosis of British academics as firmly integrated within the dominant culture and providing a general source of support rather than critique of government and the wider society. However, he maintains that there has also always been an oppositional force within British academia, not simply in marginalised groups such as Marxists associated with New Left Review, but a more widespread critique of the social order. Individuals such as Raymond Williams could be cited as a truly British intellectual. The question is raised as to what extent academics can adopt an 'intellectual' or 'critical' position within society whilst being institutionalised and integrated within a 'professional' role. British academics are more gripped by the 'academic' than the 'intellectual' calling in that they are more concerned with the inward looking norms and values of the academic profession than in reaching out to challenge and confront the wider society (Barnett, 1997).

Although Halsey (1995) endorses this view of the particularly conformist British academics, he also challenges this analysis as a means of characterising the whole profession. Similarly, he questions the claim made by Scott (1983) of the homogeneity of values and attitudes of the British academic profession. Although Scott (1983) was writing at a time prior to many of the changes made to university funding, organisation and governance during the 1980s and 1990s, Halsey (1992) is sceptical about the proclaimed lack of differentiation within the system both in terms of working conditions and attitudes and values which motivated academics. He argues, that the university system has always been differentiated and that a pyramid structure of university status and eminence has always been in evidence, although this has clearly been accentuated in light of the changes made to higher education in the last 20 years.

‘The Decline of Donnish Dominion’ (Halsey, 1995) provides a wealth of research data over a 30 year period from the 1960s to the 1990s. The initial survey carried out in 1964/5 which formed the basis of ‘The British Academics’ (Halsey and Trow, 1971) was repeated in 1976, with a further updated version of the survey in 1989. The results of these surveys were compared and contrasted. There are three key themes to Halsey’s (1995) work. Firstly, the social origins and destinations of the British academics, secondly, the characteristics of the British academic profession, including their attitudes, values and political identification and finally, the changing demographics and conditions of academic work over the last twenty years and the effects of those changes on academic perceptions of the profession and their role within it.

The primary argument made by Hasley (1995) is in terms of the declining status of academics, indicated by less autonomy and control in academic governance and the serious worsening of working conditions, including the increase in temporary contracts and part time work as well as substantially lower average earnings for academic staff. He argues, that the lower earnings of academics have been accompanied by an increased hierarchical differentiation of ranks and status. The current system is moving towards a situation whereby there will be a small core of highly paid academics and a much larger peripheral group of academics and researchers who are non-tenured and badly paid (Halsey, 1995). There is a vast amount of statistical evidence presented to support this hypothesis, a small proportion of which I shall discuss here.

The salaries of academics has markedly decreased in the last forty years. The ratio of average academic salaries to the average manufacturing salaries has decreased from 2.4 in 1951/2 to 1.54 in 1988/9 (Halsey, 1995: 131). Budget cuts to universities have been accompanied by declining average salaries to university staff. According to Halsey (1995) this decline has been uneven rather than uniform and has thus increased internal differentiation within the profession. In contrast to the unitary terms and conditions of employment claimed by Scott (1983) in the early 80s, the picture seems somewhat changed by the late 80s and early 90s and may be set to increase further if market forces within higher education continues. Halsey (1995) analyses the variation between faculties and by age, rank and gender. He concludes, when comparing faculties, that the 'dispersion between university groups, leaving aside the Oxbridge questions, is insignificant . There is only one system of national payment and such variation as it exists

is a function of differences in the faculty and rank structure of the eight university groups' (Halsey, 1995: 133). However, when further divided by ages, sex and rank there are wider variations such that 'there is, for example, a small group of Oxbridge medical professors in the last ten years of their service with stipends of over £56,000 per annum and a similarly small group of female social science research workers in the older redbricks with salaries below £11,000 per annum' (Halsey, 1995: 134). However, he concludes that the bulk of academic staff earn a comparable wage and that market forces had not changed the situation too dramatically at least by the late 80s.

Where the situation has been more radically altered is in terms of the differentiation of terms and conditions of employment between academic staff and the perceived loss of status.

So the postulated trend towards proletarianization is first a consequence of expansion. Second, autonomy with respect to working conditions has declined. The proportion of all academic staff who enjoy the protection of finance wholly from university funds fell from 84 per cent in 1970 to 77 per cent in 1980 and further to 63 per cent in 1989. A growing minority were employed directly on outside funds for specific projects, increasingly part time and at the lower ranks. The government played its own part in the undermining of traditional security, successfully pressing universities to weaken the strength of tenure for those appointed after 1988. (Halsey, 1995: 135)

It is possible to look at more recent data on working terms and conditions for academic staff and to look at differences between subject areas and institutions. Data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows the number of staff employed on a permanent or contract basis, full time or part time and what proportion of staff are employed to do teaching only, research only or teaching and research. Data from the

1997/8 academic year for Biosciences<sup>4</sup> (including Biology departments), Social Studies (including Sociology departments) and Humanities departments (including English departments) reveal interesting differences between subject areas. For example, in Biosciences 37% of staff are employed on a permanent basis and 62% on a fixed term contract (FTC). For Social studies these figures are 66% and 32% respectively and for Humanities 72% and 27%. Approximately one third of academic staff in Social Studies and Humanities are on FTC's and for Biosciences it is almost two thirds. This reflects the large proportion of temporary research staff employed in Biosciences but it also gives a clear indication of the substantial number of academic staff no longer employed on permanent contracts.

The data from HESA also show the number of staff employed on a full time, part time or casual/hourly basis. This data show interesting differences between the proportion of staff employed full time, part time and on a casual/hourly basis depending on whether they are employed primarily to teach, research or do both teaching and research. To take one example of Social Studies for 1997/8, the percentage of 'teaching only' staff employed full time was 58%, 17% part time and 26% on an hourly or casual basis. For 'research only' staff the percentages were 76%, 24% and 0.01% respectively. And for 'teaching and research' staff the figures are 92%, 8% and 0.01% respectively. These figures are similar to the ones for Biosciences and Humanities. There would seem to be a very large percentage of casual and part time staff employed as teachers and researchers (especially teachers with almost one third employed on a casual basis) within Social Studies. This

data supports the arguments made by Halsey (1995) on the declining status and working conditions of staff in higher education institutions.

These figures become slightly less dramatic when they are looked at alongside the number of academic staff employed as 'teaching only', 'research only' and 'teaching and research'. For Social Studies the figures are 7% 'teaching only', 18% 'research only' and 75% 'research and teaching'. The largest group (75%) are the academic staff employed as 'teachers and researchers' and the majority of those staff (92%) are employed full time. The smaller group of 25% 'teaching only' and 'research only' staff are more likely to be employed on a part time or casual basis. A much larger proportion of academic staff are employed on part time and casual or hourly basis and this trend may increase. A greater number are also employed on a fixed term contract rather than on a permanent basis. All of these indicators support Halsey's proletarianization thesis and show the decline in working terms and conditions for academic staff. These trends are differentiated also according to subject areas and institution. These differences will be explored further in later chapters.

One final indicator of loss of academic autonomy and security discussed by Halsey is the proportion of staff financed wholly by the institution. Once again these figures are differentiated by subject area. For 1997/8 the number of staff wholly or part financed by the institution was 48% for Biosciences, 85% for Social Studies and 90% for Humanities. Another 40% for Biosciences came from the research councils and charities, for Social Studies this was 6% and for Humanities 6%. A substantial number of academic contracts,

therefore, especially in sciences, are wholly dependent on finance from research councils and charities. Only 3.5% for Sciences and 1% and 0.6% respectively for Social Studies and Humanities came from commercial UK funding.

The evidence of declining working terms and conditions for academics is substantial and these changes are reflected also in other European countries (Fulton, 1998). Based on the findings of the Carnegie Survey conducted in 1992 (before the ending of the binary divide in England) in fourteen countries, Fulton (1998) concludes that discontent amongst academics over their working conditions is high across a number of European countries but with England leading in dissatisfaction levels.

But if we turn to more general measures of satisfaction, such as ratings of income, job security and overall professional situation, we find rather similar patterns: high discontent in England, especially with salaries, and even greater discontent in the polytechnics and colleges than in the universities; near-English levels of dissatisfaction in Sweden, but little to choose between the sectors; greater satisfaction in both sectors in Germany, except with respect to income, where the Fachhochschule are not satisfied; and still higher levels of satisfaction in the Netherlands, with quite modest differences between the sectors. (Fulton, 1998: 189)

Similar findings have emerged from Australia and the USA (Altbach, 1995; Everett and Entekin, 1994). The American higher education system is highly differentiated into different sectors and different types of institutions. There is also a more explicit hierarchy between tenured and non tenured staff as well as in pay and working conditions.

American academics have also gone through budget cuts and organisational change and changes of governance in the last two decades which have negatively affected staff morale (Altbach, 1995). Similarly, in Australia, where the higher education structure is

similar to that in the UK, radical changes to higher education, including the ending of the binary divide, have affected staff morale. Everett et al (1994) in a survey of staff in eight higher education institutions found consistently negative attitudes.

Academics in both groups of institutions have become steadily more alienated. If this trend persists, the higher education system will face severe problems of recruitment and morale. Academic administrators and those responsible for higher education policy should be concerned that most academic staff see little opportunity for advancement at their institution and do not consider criteria for promotion consistent, nor the reward structure fair and reasonable. (Everett and Entekin, 1994: 226)

It is difficult to compare countries given the different institutional structures but there is a substantial evidence that academic work is being transformed within many countries and that there is predominantly a negative perception of these changes by academic staff.

There is a considerable body of evidence, therefore, within the UK and in other countries on the changing terms and conditions of academic work and the negative impact that this has had on staff morale and perceptions of the academic profession. Decreasing levels of autonomy within academic work, decreasing salaries and decreasing levels of job satisfaction are evident.

Where does this leave the academic profession and specifically the idea of the unified and homogeneous profession in the UK identified by Scott (1983)? How, if at all, can the academic profession be characterised? Is it possible to talk about an 'academic culture' as opposed to the disciplinary cultures outlined by Becher (1989)? There are few research studies on the 'academic profession' but the studies which have been carried out are



fairly detailed in scope both in the UK, America and other European countries (Ruscio, 1987; Clark, 1987; Fulton, 1998; Halsey, 1995).

Fulton (1998) argues, on the basis of this data collected for the 1992 Carnegie Survey of fourteen countries, that although there are obvious disciplinary differences to be found, the academic profession in Europe although fragmented is still cohesive and can be shown to share common working conditions, recruitment and remuneration to cite some examples. The evidence given from this survey, however, would seem to suggest that what they share is a common set of grievances over working conditions, recruitment and remuneration.

A study by Ruscio (1987), whilst set in the American university system, undertakes to explore the institutional and sectorial differences within the university system by interviewing over 100 members of the American professoriat. The American university system is very different from that in Britain. It is a system that is divided into various sectors of universities and colleges with differing aims and objectives. Broadly the different sectors can be labelled as; research universities, elite and non-elite liberal arts colleges, state universities and community colleges.

Ruscio (1987) is interested in the implications of the diversity of institutions on the work which academics do, their participation in institutional governance and their values and attitudes. Unlike the conclusions of Scott (1983), he argues that there is wide diversity between academics in different institutions along these dimensions. For example, his

study shows that significantly more time is spent on research at research and state universities than at liberal arts and community colleges although he does maintain that some form of research happens at all institutions. There are also, however variations across disciplines, for example, with political scientists spending less time on research than biologists within the same institution. One of the central questions within Ruscio's research is the relative influence of disciplinary differences and institutional differences on research activity. Given his primary interest in institutional differences, he concludes:

Within institutions and departments there is a research context shaped by interrelated structural variables. These include department size, generality of courses (for example ratio of graduate to undergraduate courses taught by an individual), teaching load, coverage of subfields, and the interaction with other departments. We can hypothesise that the nature of research is determined in part by the organisational setting. Other major influences shaping the nature of research are its rationale or purpose and the institutional attitudes towards it. (Ruscio, 1987: 345)

The working practices of academics in terms of time spent on teaching and research activities, therefore, are found by Ruscio (1987) to be markedly different across each sector of the higher education system. He also found contrasting reasons given by professors for their commitment to either teaching or research. The definitions of research can also vary across institutions with concepts of 'scholarship' for example being very different at a research university and a liberal arts university.

The smaller size of the higher education system in Britain and the fact that it is not divided into different sectors as in the American system, may account for the more homogeneous nature of the profession. Furthermore, common socialisation process which academics experience during their undergraduate and postgraduate years might serve to

unite the profession. Many academics have their student years in high status institutions and their common experience within these institutions may be less varied than those gained in employment in different parts of the system, either 'old' or 'new' universities (Halsey, 1995; Becher, 1989).

Trowler (1998) argues, on the other hand, that research on higher education institutions has been disproportionately concerned with the high status elite institutions and has paid less attention to other low status institutions such as the former polytechnics. Research conducted on academic cultures which looks only at an elite sample of institutions may present an overly simplified analysis of academic values. For example, Scott (1983) argues that an important element of the common academic values system is the shared ideas of how undergraduate education should be conducted. Halsey (1995), however, identifies differing ideologies between academics depending on their beliefs in an elite or an expanded system of higher education. Furthermore, their desire to construct new knowledge in the form of original research or to pass on knowledge in the form of teaching further divided the profession in the beliefs on the academic vocation and the meaning and purpose a university. He thus divides academics into either elitist teachers or elitist researchers and expansionist teachers or expansionist researchers.

In his research on one institution, a 'new' university, Trowler (1998) identifies four different educational ideologies which he found expressed by the academics he interviewed. These are traditionalism, progressivism, enterprise and social reconstructionism. Traditionalism, therefore, would express they key disciplinary, 'gold

standard' ideology identified by Scott (1983) and may be the more predominant ideologies of the high status, elite sector of higher education. By studying different sectors of the profession, however, radically different viewpoints emerge.

Trowler's (1998) research is concerned with academics responding to change, in this case the introduction of the credit framework, defined as 'the constellation of features associated with the assignment of credit value to assessed learning, including modularity, franchising and the accreditation of prior learning' (Trowler, 1998). This work is located within a more sociological set of questioning which begins to raise issues concerning the structure and agency dimension of changes within the university system. He argues, that much of the current literature on change in higher education, relies on a one way analysis of power and cultural determination (structure) with little concern for the part played by academics on the ground in the 'enactment' of cultural values (agency). Using the concept of structuration (Giddens, 1984), Trowler argues that academics play a more active part in the construction of academic culture and in the implementation of policy measures than is often reflected in the literature which bemoans the disempowerment of academics and the decline of donnish dominion (Halsey, 1992).

He maintains, moreover that academic values and beliefs are not fixed but are rather located within struggles to 'resolve competing expectations, interests and sets of values' (Trowler, 1998). For example, the educational ideologies referred to earlier could be expressed on different occasions by individual academics such that they could subscribe to one or more of these competing ideologies depending on the context of the discussion.

Thus this academic's educational ideology, his personal interests and the epistemological characteristics of his area of specialism contained inherent incompatibilities ... (Trowler, 1998: 134)

In his analysis of one 'new' university, Trowler (1998) attempts to account for academics' responses to policy changes in the light of a more complex model of structural positions and forms of cultural enactment and construction. He analyses the particular 'types' of responses which academics had to the introduction of this policy change. He situates these responses, however, within a complex structural framework including, the epistemological characteristics of the discipline, educational ideologies and organisational features of the institution. His study shows that these structural features do not wholly determine the attitudes and practices of academics although 'types' of responses are embedded within these structures. His examples show the multiple (and sometimes conflicting) ideologies which are used by individuals creatively to obstruct and re-interpret policy changes.

Trowler's analysis of change in higher education provides a more theoretical and analytical approach than is evidenced in most literature on this subject. His engagement with debates on structure and agency help to throw new light on the differential values and practices of academics in particular institutional settings. The present study aims to make a contribution to further these debates. In the next chapter, therefore, I will discuss the work of Pierre Bourdieu in order to re-think some of the issues raised on structure and agency and some of the issues surrounding power and cultural signification within higher education.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The circulation of pre prints and personal discussions at conferences would be the primary means of securing information on potentially threatening research. (Mulkay, 1991)

<sup>2</sup> A particularly ingenuous example of this kind of sociological work is given by one of Mulkay's students. In Ashmore, M (1989) 'The Reflexive Thesis: wrighting sociology of scientific knowledge', the final chapter is a copy of the proceedings of the students PhD viva which does the job of firstly, exposing the process of the Ph.D. viva ( a largely private affair) and secondly, upsetting the traditional narrative form of sociology by presenting it in dialogue form exactly as it took place.

<sup>3</sup> Stage 1 involves some interesting discoveries being made that provide models for future work and can attract new scientists. During stage 2, a few scientists set priorities and recruit and train students who become collaborators and maintain informal contact with other members of the area. This is a period of exponential growth in publications and new members to the area. Stage 3 and 4 involve a decline in membership and publications as seminal ideas are exhausted. (Crane, 1972)

<sup>4</sup> Data from HESA is collected according to cost centre and cannot be broken down into subject areas or departments.

## CHAPTER THREE

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### **Homo Academicus: researching the ‘academic field’**

By sketching out this sort of intellectual autobiography, I do not believe I am surrendering to some form of narcissism: on the contrary, by trying to act as an informant on the social conditions of the formation of my thought, I would like to serve as an example of and an encouragement to self-socioanalysis...

If I was able, in a way which seems to me to be rather ‘exact’, to collectivise the field that I had just entered, it was undoubtedly because the highly improbably social trajectory that had led me from a remote village in a remote region of southwestern France to what was then the apex of the French educational system predisposed me to a particularly sharpened and critical intuition of the intellectual field. More precisely, the anti-intellectualism inscribed in my dispositions as ‘class defector’ (transfuge) disappointed by the reality of an intellectual universe idealised from afar, contributed to my breaking with the intellectual doxa... (Bourdieu, 1995: 269)

Opening a book by Bourdieu is like tuning in to a Bach fugue. The sentences are elegant but neverending. You slide down a verbal slipway of ingenious repetitions, inversions, negations and demonstrations all of unexpected symmetry. There is a real danger of dizziness. (Smith, 1989: 384)

Despite his intellectual roots as a philosopher and his initial research studies in anthropology, Bourdieu resolutely claims the title of sociologist. Although, he also argues that one of his primary aims has been to ‘abolish the separation of sociology from ethnology’ (Bourdieu, 1994b). The scope of Bourdieu’s work is extremely wide. In order to fully grasp the magnitude of his sociological project, I will provide a detailed outline of some of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of his work and his primary concepts of ‘field’, ‘capital’ and ‘habitus’. The discussion provided is given in order to

contextualise these concepts. The aims of this thesis are more modest in scope and therefore cannot address many of the influential debates and issues raised by Bourdieu's work. The intention, however, is to discuss these in enough detail in order that the more limited use made of his concepts should not be stripped from their philosophical and sociological context.

I will assess Bourdieu's claim to reconstruct the theory/practice divide within sociology and his insistence on theory as practice. Central to this are the key ideas of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus', each of which I shall discuss in turn. I will then focus on Bourdieu's study of the 'scientific field' and the 'academic field', primarily in the text *Homo Academicus*. Critical to this area of research is the use made by Bourdieu of the concept of 'reflexivity', which is substantially different from the 'textual' reflexivity associated with certain sociologists of science (see chapter two). Reflexivity will be discussed in detail here and in the next chapter on methodology.

Secondly, I will compare Bourdieu's work to the research discussed in chapter two and show how it differs from the traditional studies of academic communities and the academic profession. I will assess the extent to which his approach may serve as an alternative to the shortcomings of much of this work identified by Trowler (1998) in terms of epistemological essentialism and the claims for a unified profession. Following Trowler (1998), I believe that a conceptualisation of the structure/agency relationship is important for an analysis of structural and cultural changes within higher education.



Bourdieu offers a very different framework for analysis of this relationship, however, and it is this approach that will be utilised in this study.

Finally, therefore, I will outline in detail the way in which Bourdieu's work will be used in the present study. I will emphasise the possibilities and problems with his central concepts of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus' and argue that a case study methodology might be an appropriate means of studying the interaction of 'habitus' and 'field'. I will show how this approach can address the central concerns of this thesis.

### **An Introduction to Bourdieu's Sociology: a relational analysis of social reality**

Bourdieu's work defies any simple classification, although many commentators have tried to label him in a variety of ways. These labels are often contradictory such as Structural Functionalist and/or Marxist, Postmodernist and/or Modernist. Bourdieu himself takes these differing interpretations of his work as a sign that he is on the right road, if he is able to be challenging to proponents of all sides of the argument. He delights in the idea of being 'suggestive and worrying' to 'the guardians of orthodoxy' (Bourdieu, 1993). Fowler (1996) argues that Bourdieu is predominantly a 'realist' or can be categorised under the term of 'new realism' (Sayer, 1990) or more appropriately a 'perspectively enriched realism' (Bourdieu, 1990a). Realist theory is "premised on the social equivalent of 'intransitive objects' in the natural world, such as forces of gravity... the generative social relations which possess more causal power than others..." (Fowler,

1996: 7). Realist social science is also concerned with generating and testing hypothesis but these are constructed as merely claims to truth which must be tested “through the intersubjective judgement of the scientific community” (Fowler, 1996: 7). For Bourdieu, as suggested by the ‘perspectively enriched’ realism, this would also be a concern with the social position of researcher which is always a perspective, or point of view on a point of view.

Fowler (1996) also maintains that a subjective understanding of social agents is critical to a realist social science, although an exploration solely of subjective understanding can never give the whole picture as other “semi- or unconscious forces (may be) operating which also have causal force and which sociology must elucidate” (Fowler, 1996: 8). The significance of these issues is central to Bourdieu’s work and realist social theory is perhaps closest to his sociological project. Within this project I will be looking primarily at the ‘subjective’ accounts of academics. However, the ‘objective’ structures governing their accounts, both within the academic and the disciplinary *field*, will also be an important site of analysis.

Bourdieu’s intellectual grounding was in philosophy and his early work was in anthropological research, undertaking fieldwork in Algeria during the War of Independence (Robbins, 1993). His embrace of sociology, therefore, came later in his career which explains firstly, why his work spans the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, sociology and ethnology and secondly, why as an ‘outsider’ he instigated a radical questioning of many of the fundamental issues within sociological theory and

sociological research methods, not least of which was the insistence to overcome what he perceived to be the false dichotomy of theory and research.

Bourdieu's 'project', if it can be called that, was predominantly to overcome or supersede the dichotomies within sociological thought which informed the means by which sociological work could be done. His central argument with regard to the theory/research dichotomy was that they are not separate but instead are "mutually generative ways and means of collecting data, analysing it and developing explanations which lead to an understanding of the object being investigated" (Grenfell and James, 1998: 155). In contrast to the inductive and deductive method of relating theory to the practice of research, therefore, Bourdieu sees them as bound in a mutually reinforcing relationship where one is implicated by the activation of the other. Thus he terms it 'theory as practice' denoting the implicit necessity of research practice to the possibility of constructing social theory.

The thread which leads from one of my works to the next is the logic of research, which is in my eyes inseparably empirical and theoretical. In my practice, I found the theoretical ideas that I consider most important conducting an interview or coding a survey questionnaire. For instance, the critique of social taxonomies that led me to rethink the problem of social classes from top to bottom... was born of reflections on the concrete difficulties encountered in classifying the occupations of respondents. This is what enabled me to escape the vague and wordy generalization on classes that reenact the eternal and fictitious confrontation of Marx and Weber. (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 160)

Scientific theory, according to Bourdieu, is only possible through the practice of empirical research as a means of actualising theory (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992), each is enabled and constructed by the other. Bourdieu's principal concepts of 'field', 'habitus'

and 'symbolic capital' were constructed during the process of empirical research and should continue to be evaluated in relation to the practicalities of research projects (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992) rather than be treated as simple 'theories' on the organisation of the social world. They are intended to be used as 'thinking tools' (Grenfell and James, 1998) rather than as rigid concepts. It is within this spirit of investigation that these concepts will also be used in this study.

Recent attempts to bridge the theory/practice divide (Layder, 1998) have looked for ways to overcome the limitations and prescriptions of both the inductive and the deductive approaches. Layder's (1998) term 'adaptive theory' implies the constant process of reordering theoretical frameworks in the light of empirical investigation and acknowledging the theoretical influences present at all stages of empirical research. Thus, he seeks to go beyond the inductive procedures of grounded theory on the one hand and deductive, positivistic hypothesis testing on the other. However, the concept of adaptive theory maintains the idea of a separate role for theory and practice, albeit a mutually reinforcing one, in the context of empirical research. Bourdieu, on the other hand, denies the possibility of one without the other. He is not looking simply to overcome the divisions of inductive and deductive approaches to producing knowledge, but is concerned with a deeper level of epistemological questioning. This involves not only the means by which we collect and verify sociological knowledge and provide sociological explanations but also how the role of the researcher is implicated in this process.

However, to research in this way, is not to discover or apply laws of causality or rules of practice, which presupposes a detached observer and a higher

epistemological authority. Rather it is to engage in the social world in theory and practice in ways which implicate the researched and the researcher in the same theory of practice. (Grenfell and James, 1998: 157)

Bourdieu's work is firmly engaged with issues of methodology, although he resists any classification as a methodologist. His research studies engage with 'grand theory' issues and debates such as that between structure and agency, and subjective and objective modes of enquiry, but he likewise dismisses any classification of himself as a social theorist. He claims to do 'scientific work that mobilises all the theoretical resources for the purposes of empirical analysis' (Bourdieu, 1993). He also describes his research as 'fieldwork in philosophy' (Bourdieu, 1994b).

The work of Bourdieu is not amenable to simple categorisation. The complex and dense prose of his major texts can not be readily summarised, especially since he himself has worked hard to express his ideas in a way which cannot be reduced to ordinary common sense (or 'doxic') meanings. His work has been criticised for using unnecessarily complex language and torrid sentence structures (Jenkins, 1998). His careful use of language and expression of his ideas is necessary in order to institute a process of 'distanciation' of the reader from the text and thus avoid any misreading or misunderstanding. Bourdieu's struggle therefore, not to be misunderstood both in his intentions and in his use of language, terminology and concepts means that it is often necessary to clarify in detail the sense of what he is trying to communicate in his ideas.

What I will try to do here is outline some of the key themes of his work, beginning with his notions of 'field', 'habitus' and forms of 'symbolic capital' and the way in which he

uses these to transcend the structure/agency dichotomy and construct his theories on what motivates and organises the practice and experience of agents in the social world. I will then discuss his use of these concepts in studying the examples of the 'academic field' and the 'scientific field'. The concepts must be explained in detail in order to try and capture the true sense of what Bourdieu is trying to communicate in his use of them.

The intellectual influences on Bourdieu's work have sprung mainly from a desire to rethink classic philosophical and sociological traditions and the dichotomies which divide them. In terms of his treatment of the structure/agency and subjective/objective debates, 'a central role must be granted to the opposition between Sartrean phenomenology and Levi-Straussian structuralism, which Bourdieu regarded very early on as the embodiment of the fundamental option between objectivist structuralism and subjectivist social phenomena' (Wacquant, 1993: 246). In contrast to the structuralist emphasis on social structure as determining social action or the phenomenological insistence on the primacy of human experience and perception for understanding social action, Bourdieu's development of the concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' stem from his argument that agents and the social world (structure and agency) are 'two dimensions of the social' (Calhoun, LiPuma et al., 1993), they are simultaneously constructed. 'Social agents are incorporated bodies who possess, indeed, are possessed by structural, generative schemes which operate by orientating social practice' (Grenfell and James, 1998: 12).

'Habitus'<sup>1</sup> is understood as the incorporation or internalisation of social structures, as lived experience. These structures determine the conditions of possibility of social action,

but these processes are intertwined such that 'agents are socially determined to the extent that they determine themselves' (Bourdieu, 1989b). The knowing subject is a precondition to the structuring of social action. Agents are not automatons responding to the laws of social structure but neither do they exist in a state of voluntarism or rationally make calculated choices and decisions according to rational action theory (RAT). They are instead following a social logic which propels them towards possible social destinies already inscribed in their historical and cultural background and which they insert themselves into. This is explained as Bourdieu's theory of practice.

In fact, 'subjects' are active and knowing agents endowed with a practical sense, that is, an acquired system of preferences, of principles of vision and division (what is usually called taste), and also a system of durable cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of the internalisation of objective structures) and of schemes of action which orient the perception of the situation and the appropriate response. The habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation - what is called in sport a 'feel' for the game, that is, the art of anticipating the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play. (Bourdieu, 1998: 25)

Bourdieu is concerned that this process is not interpreted as subjects following social rules or their action being determined by a fixed social mechanism. The process is more dynamic and there are multiple configurations of possible social action. The social background of an individual implies a particular social trajectory of possible futures. However, these are in no way inscribed. There is everything to play for.

The structural features of the social world are organised by 'fields'. Bourdieu defines the idea of a 'field' as follows:

Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them). There are general laws of fields: fields as different as the field of politics, the field of philosophy or the field of religion have invariant laws of functioning... Whenever one studies a new field, whether it be the field of philology in the nineteenth century, contemporary fashion or religion in the middle ages, one discovers specific properties that are peculiar to that field, at the same time as one pushed forward our knowledge of the universal mechanisms of fields, which are specified in terms of secondary variables. For example, national variables such as the struggle between the challengers and the established dominant actors take different forms. But in every field we know that we will find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition. (Bourdieu, 1993: 72)

A central feature of the understanding of a field is that it must be analysed 'relationally'. For Bourdieu, therefore, the 'real is relational' but this does not refer to relations between agents, as in inter-subjectivity but as 'objective relations' between positions in a field (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 97).

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field... (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 97)

The key to the functioning of a particular field or the main 'invariant' feature, is that it is a site of struggle. The struggle is over the boundaries and who is legitimated to enter. The precise terms of the struggle, however, must be determined by an empirical study of each particular field. The invariants can be summarised as struggles and strategies to be used and interests and profits which are yielded. Bourdieu wishes to distance his form of



analysis of fields and interests from the traditional, neo-classical interpretation of interest as economic interest and investment and profit as monetary or material profit. Bourdieu uses these terms to signify the particular 'social' profits obtained by engaging in the struggles within particular fields. He argues that 'the specifically social magic of institution can constitute almost anything as an interest' (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu summarises the interrelationship between field and habitus as follows:

Investment is the disposition to act that is generated in the relationship between a space defined by a game offering certain prizes or stakes (what I call a field) and a system of dispositions attuned to that game (what I call a habitus) - the 'feel' for the game and the stakes, which implies both the inclination and the capacity to play that game, to take an interest in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game. (Bourdieu, 1993: 18)

The relationship between habitus and field is not one of a 'cynical calculation' to gain the maximum social profit from any field but more of an unconscious following of the 'natural bent' of the habitus. The process, or game, is not one of conscious rationalisation but more one of unconscious involvement and psychological and emotional investment of energy or 'libido'. Misunderstanding of the terminology used by Bourdieu has caused the idea of investment and interest to be interpreted as a 'conscious project' or rational calculation. He argues, however, that it 'is not true to say that everything that people do or say is aimed at maximising their social profit; but one may say that they do it to perpetuate or to augment their social being' (Bourdieu, 1995).

The struggle to augment one's social being, for Bourdieu is a struggle for symbolic life and death. In each social field, agents struggle to accumulate forms of 'symbolic capital'.

The maximising of social profit, therefore, is a maximising of the symbolic capital which is operable within any given social field. Symbolic capital is the social product of the field. The different forms of capital are 'social', 'cultural' and 'economic'. A crude distinction of each would be that 'social' capital refers primarily to the network of social relations one has, or of 'more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1986). 'Economic' capital refers to the material wealth. 'Cultural' capital is identified as a complex array of educational qualifications and forms of cultural differentiation in terms of language and general proximity to and knowledge of cultural institutions. However, cultural capital cannot simply be thought of as cultural 'objects' to be acquired or possessed.

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.),... and in the institutionalised state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (Bourdieu, 1986: 243)

Agents are positioned within a social field by virtue of their total accumulation of symbolic capital which can be gained from any combination of economic, cultural and social capital. Power within a field is ultimately gained by the possession of symbolic capital. The site of struggle within fields, however, is not just over possession of capital but over the very definition of what capital is at stake and what is valued. In this sense, therefore, capital is arbitrary and the determination of what capital is valued is constantly being defined and redefined. As discussed earlier, the invariant of a field is that it is a site of struggle; the variants of a field are what need to be analysed in order to understand the

its operation. Thus, the variants of forms of capital are different across and within fields, at different times. Analysis of social fields is a process of understanding the different forms of capital and how they are valued within it. Social fields are structured by the differential possession of forms of capital but individuals are also motivated to increase their possession of this capital. There is, therefore, a dynamic process of a reproduction of social fields but also a motivational force either to increase one's capital or struggle to re-determine the conditions of value placed on certain forms of capital. It is these processes which analysis of social fields seeks to understand. Forms of capital are also inter-changeable with, for example, economic capital enabling accumulation of cultural capital and vice versa.

The most effective way to make clear the understanding of the concepts of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' is to discuss them within the context of a particular social field. I intend to do this, therefore, by looking in detail at Bourdieu's analysis of the 'academic field'. This will also begin to set out the forms of analysis that will be used in the present study to investigate the academic field or research field in the current UK university system.

### **Homo Academicus : the study of the 'academic field'**

The research on the French university field in Homo Academicus was undertaken by Bourdieu in the 1960s, prior to the events of May 1968 in Paris. The research is presented

as an analysis of the university system at that time and the structure and functioning of the academic field. The research details the structural and morphological changes which were happening within the system, including the rapid increase in the number of university students and the growth in the numbers of academic staff, especially low status academic staff. Bourdieu, argues that these changes to the structure of the system instituted a form of disillusionment with the academic system, because of the declining value of degrees conferred and the restricted career opportunities for the newly recruited academic staff. These events partly instigated the anti-institutional feeling and forms of rebellion which characterised the events of May 1968. The position which an academic occupied within the university space, argued Bourdieu, determined the likelihood of their involvement in the protests and their political attitudes more generally. In order to understand an agent's attitudes or involvement in the site of struggle which is the university space, therefore, you must analyse their position within that social space.

In fact, like the social field taken as a whole, the university field is the locus of a classification struggle which, by working to preserve or transform the state of the power relations between the different criteria and between the different powers which they designate, helps create the classification, such as it may be objectively grasped at any given moment in time; but the representation which the agents have of the classification, and the force and the orientation of the strategies they deploy to maintain or subvert it, depend on their position in the objective classification. (Bourdieu, 1988: 18)

In order to analyse positions within the university field, it is necessary to map out the structures of power within that field, i.e. the symbolic capital. This involves determining the variants that operate within the field and the possible strategies for accumulating social, cultural and material capital. These forms of symbolic capital are not fixed but are

a constant site of negotiation and struggle over the principles of hierarchization upon which value is produced and agents are more or less endowed. Bourdieu (1988) argues that there are rival principles of hierarchization within the academic field such that there is a 'multiplicity of scales of evaluation, for example, scientific or administrative, academic or intellectual', offering a 'multiplicity of paths to salvation and forms of excellence' (p.19). Different hierarchies exist, therefore, across faculties and across disciplines such that agents are able to mobilise their resources to yield the greatest amount of symbolic capital and maximise the value of their activities within the academic field. He maintains, for example, that the division of the academic field into disciplines and further sub-specialisms, although themselves structured hierarchically, are autonomous, and therefore allow the possibility of maximising symbolic capital within the specialism. Recognition granted for the work of a scientist within a sub-specialism in biology, for example, may have little value within the academic field as a whole but it serves to legitimate and recognise the activities within that smaller area.

The different forms of capital which Bourdieu identifies for the university field as a whole, including examples of indicators of possession of these forms of capital, are as follows;

1. determinants of the habitus and of academic success, the economic capital and above all the inherited cultural and social capital: the social origins, father's profession, geographical origins, religion of the family;

2. educational determinants, educational capital, school attended, educational success, establishment attended for higher education;
3. capital of academic power: membership of the Institute of the Universities Consultative Committee (CCU), tenure of positions such as Dean or Director of the UER (Unit of Education and Research = university institute), director of institute etc. (membership of the board of examiners for the national competitive examinations, or entrance to the ENS, for the agregation, etc...;
4. capital of scientific power: direction of a research unit, of a scientific review, teaching in an institution of training for research, membership of the directorate of the CNRS, of committees of the CNRS, of the Higher Council for Scientific Research;
5. the capital of scientific prestige: membership of the Institute, scientific distinctions, translations into foreign languages, participation in international congresses (the number of mentions in the Citations Index, too variable from faculty to faculty, was not usable, nor was the editorship of scientific reviews or collections);
6. the capital of intellectual renown: membership of the Academie Francaise and mention in Larousse, appearances on television, writing for newspapers, weeklies or intellectual reviews, publication in paperback, membership of editorial committees of intellectual reviews;
7. the capital of political or economic power: mention in Who's Who, membership of ministerial cabinets, of planning committees..., decorations of various kinds;
8. 'political' dispositions in the widest sense...

The two main forms of hierarchical structure within this field are those of academic and scientific power. Academic capital being the primary involvement of reproduction within the system and scientific capital relating to research activities and the production of knowledge. Indicators for these forms of capital are given above. There is a hierarchical ordering of these activities, according to Bourdieu, with academic power as less valued than the research activities of scientists.

It is understandable that academic power is so often independent of specifically scientific capital and the recognition it attracts. As a temporal power in a world which is neither actually nor statutorily destined for that sort of power, it always tends to appear, perhaps even in the eyes of its most confident possessors, as a substitute, or a consolation prize. We can understand too the profound ambivalence of the academics who devote themselves to administration towards those who devote themselves, successfully to research - especially in a system where institutional loyalty is weak and largely unrewarded. (Bourdieu, 1988: 99)

A similar hierarchical ordering is given for the division between teaching and research with the researchers' working life being akin to the 'freedom and audacity of the artists life', with the teachers' activities being more 'strict and circumscribed'. The key to the positioning of academics within these hierarchical divisions of academic labour is the amount of time invested in the particular activities and means of production which afford an accumulation of the specific capital operative within each division. I shall quote Bourdieu's explanation of this in full.

Thus nothing could better sum up the set of oppositions established between those situated at the two poles of the university field than the structure of their time-economy (because of the fact that the kind of capital possessed influences on the way in which agents allocate their time): on the one side those who invest above all in the work of accumulation and management of academic capital - including their 'personal' work, devoted to a considerable extent to the production of intellectual

instruments which are instruments of specifically academic power, lectures, textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.; on the one side, those who invest above all in production and, secondarily, in the work of representation which contributes to the accumulation of a symbolic capital of external renown. Indeed, those richest in external prestige could be divided again according to the proportion of their time which they devote to production properly speaking or to the direct promotion of their products (especially working in the academic import-export trade colloquia, symposia, conferences, reciprocal invitations etc.)... (Bourdieu, 1988: 99)

Bourdieu also argues, that there is a principle of division between older and younger professors with the former endowed with more academic titles and signifiers of prestige than the latter. He also maintains that a similar form of distinction is evident between different types of institutions. In the French university system this would be between, for example, the College de France on the one side and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and the faculty of Nanterre on the other.

The academic field, therefore, is highly differentiated according to type of institution or faculty, discipline and sub-specialism and age and status of professor or academic staff. Academic staff can be located according to their position within the different hierarchies and their possession of the types of capital discussed above. All of these criteria determine their value or the extent to which their symbolic capital has power or is recognised within the academic field. The struggle to determine the classifications within the hierarchies, the construction of 'value' by which judgement is made, is the struggle for 'symbolic life and death' (Bourdieu, 1988) of agents in the academic field.

The trajectory of agents within the academic field is principally determined by what could be termed the 'academic habitus', the 'feel for the game' which they have. This



refers to their 'practical sense' of the principle of hierarchization discussed above and their attempts to maximise their *symbolic profits* by accumulating the necessary capital. It must be re-emphasised that these strategies are intended to maximise the specific symbolic or social profits within the academic field and cannot be equated with an economic reductionism. Furthermore, Bourdieu is concerned to emphasise that these strategies or practices should not be interpreted as a cynical calculation of ends and means. The strategies are more an unconscious attempt to realise one's potential in the academic field than a form of rational choice or conscious decision-making.

Critical to the correspondence between habitus and practice is the concept of 'illusio'. The idea is that agents involved in the 'game' within a social field do not perceive it as a game; they believe in it, they take it seriously. The strategies and systems of values within a field may appear illusory to anyone outside of the field, e.g. the Philosophy field and its concerns may seem alien to the Economist. However, the participants of the field have an intense involvement with the rules of the game. It is an investment in a social field that Bourdieu argues could equally be described as a form of 'libido'. It exists as a means of social expression and form of legitimisation for the players involved, indeed, it is their struggle to 'augment their social being' in an expression through this game which is both socially instituted (objective/field) and is incorporated in their bodily self (subjective/habitus). Bourdieu describes it thus;

What is experienced as obvious in illusio appears as an illusion to those who do not participate in the obviousness because they do not participate in the game...Agents well-adjusted to the game are possessed by the game and doubtless all the more so the better they master it. For example, one of the privileges associated with the fact

of being born in the game is that one can avoid cynicism since one has a feel for the game; like a good tennis player, one positions oneself not where the ball is but where it will be; one invests oneself not where the profit is, but where it will be. (Bourdieu, 1998: 79)

For Bourdieu's theory of practice, therefore, agents have strategic intentions but these are rarely experienced as conscious intentions. Agents have a 'practical sense' of the game, they do not consciously manoeuvre and calculate their aims. When they are involved in a social field or game, they are 'possessed by the ends' of that field and 'they may be ready to die for those ends' (Bourdieu, 1998).

Within the present study, therefore, I will endeavour to analyse the principles of hierarchization within the UK academic field and to determine the specific forms of capital which are operative within that field. The means by which policy changes, specifically the RAE has influenced what is deemed of *symbolic value* within the academic field and the continuing struggles of classification will also be of primary importance in this work. In relation to this, I am also interested in the possible ways in which the *academic habitus* has been influenced by changing rewards, or *prizes* within the academic *game*. For example, to what extent has policy changes such as the RAE served to dispel the 'illutio' of academic life? Alongside what can be seen as the 'proletarianization' of academic working conditions, has there also been a disenchantment of the 'unconscious bent' of the habitus such that the accumulation of symbolic capital has become a more 'conscious' and 'rational' process?

These questions form the basis of the research aims of this study. However, Bourdieu's study of the academic field was not done purely for the interest in the subject matter. He also believes that research of this kind is absolutely necessary for the possibility of a social *science*.

### **Reflexivity and socio-analysis**

When research comes to study the very realm within which it operates, the results which it obtains can be immediately reinvested in scientific work as instruments of reflexive knowledge of the conditions and the social limits of this work, which is one of the principal weapons of epistemological vigilance. Indeed, perhaps we can only make our knowledge of the scientific field progress using whatever knowledge we may have available in order to discover and overcome the obstacles to science which are entailed by the fact of holding a determined position in the field. (Bourdieu, 1988: 16)

Bourdieu's intention to study the academic field was not simply to provide an interesting sociological study of this area of social life. He believes that this kind of analyses is imperative for a truly 'scientific' sociology. Sociologists cannot hope to understand or represent the social world without first understanding the conditions of possibility of speaking truthfully about the social world. To this end he advocates a 'reflexive' sociology which understands its own position in the social order (academics as a dominated section of the dominant class). Sociologists should not attempt to stand outside society and study it 'objectively' from a distance but should be more 'reflexively' aware of their own position in the social order, the structures of power and the forms of interest which motivate them.

A similar claim for the need of a reflexive sociology was argued by Gouldner (1971)

What sociologists now most require from a reflexive sociology, however, is not just another specialisation, not just another topic...not just another burbling little stream of technical reports about the sociological professions origins, educational characteristics, patterns of productivity, political preferences, communication networks, nor even about its fads, foibles and phonies... I conceive of reflexive sociology as requiring an empirical dimension which might foster a large variety of researches about sociology and sociologists, their occupational roles, their career 'hang-ups', their establishments, power systems, subcultures and their place in the larger social world. (Gouldner, 1971: 489)

Gouldner advocates, therefore, the importance of a reflexive sociology that is willing to question and investigate the role of sociologists and academics more generally, as part of the social world.

However, Bourdieu is critical of much of the sociological work which has been carried out under this direction of reflexivity, arguing that the end result is of classifying sociologists and academics into different 'types'. This kind of analysis results in the 'concept-as-insult and the semi-scholarly stereotype - like that of the 'jet sociologist' - become transformed into semi-scientific 'types' - consultant, outsider - and all the subtle indices where the position of the analyst in the space being analysed is betrayed' (Bourdieu, 1988). Bourdieu is referring to the classifications given by Gouldner (1971) of for example, the 'locals', the 'cosmopolitans' and the 'empire builders'. Similarly, Clark (1963) describes the 'teacher', the 'scholar-researcher', the 'demonstrator' and the 'consultant'. Bourdieu argues that these classification types, although 'superficially convincing', do not capture the complexity of an individual case which a truly scientific

understanding would produce by being 'more distant from the immediate representation of the real given by ordinary language or its semi-scholarly translation' (Bourdieu, 1988: 13).

Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, therefore, has two components. Firstly, to study the power relations of the academic field in terms of the forms of symbolic capital which are operative and the principles of hierarchization (faculty, discipline etc...) which determine the social positions within the field and in turn interests and motivation. Secondly, the sociologist must herself analyse her own position within the field and in the social world generally in order to understand the principles of her own self (determination) and forms of interest. This implies a process of socio-analysis and self socio-analysis of the kind referred to by Bourdieu in the quotation which opened this chapter. This second form of reflexivity is also important for understanding the role of the sociologist in the research process, for example, the social position adopted by interviewer and interviewee in an interview situation. This will be further explored in the next chapter.

Bourdieu puts his faith in the scientific field to enable the development of what he terms a 'realpolitik of reason' (Bourdieu, 1998). To be truly scientific, however, involves a reflexive analysis which includes taking the field of 'science', alongside that of the academic and intellectual field, as an area of study and particularly a questioning of the norm of disinterestedness (Merton, 1996) of scientific activity. For Bourdieu, intellectuals (or scientists or academics) have 'disinterested interests' or an 'interest in disinterestedness'<sup>2</sup> (Bourdieu, 1993). The particular issue at stake within the scientific

field is that of scientific authority, the struggle to impose one's own definition of 'science' or what is collectively recognised as scientific work.

It is the scientific field which, as the locus of a political struggle for scientific domination, assigns each researcher, as a function of his position within it, his indissociably political and scientific problems and his methods...Every scientific 'choice' - the choice of the area of research, the choice of methods, the choice of the place of publication...is in one respect...a political investment strategy, directed, objectively at least, toward maximisation of strictly scientific profit, i.e., of potential recognition by the agent's competitor-peers. (Bourdieu, 1984b: 262)

In order to produce a truly scientific 'science' one must ignore the 'official fiction' of 'pure disinterestedness' which is claimed to operate within the scientific field. Instead one must analyse in detail the 'struggles and strategies, interests and profits' which structure the field. A truly reflexive science would involve the sociologists' own stakes in the 'game' and identify the structural position from which they make claims. This uncovering of the interests of scientists, Bourdieu believes, may result in a disenchantment but it is a necessary step towards what he terms a sociological utopianism which would be a 'rational and politically conscious use of the limits of freedom afforded by a true knowledge of social laws and especially of the historical conditions of validity' (Bourdieu, 1989b).

Bourdieu does not want to encourage a disenchantment with scientific aims but instead wants to strengthen the possibility of scientific knowledge of the social world. Similarly he does not want to expose the 'interests' of academics as a means of limiting the power of the academic field and the institutional bases of that power but to strengthen its claim to the authority of legitimisation awarded it. This will be instituted only by the

continuation of a scientific field which rewards scientific activities and strategies, but also includes a reflexive study of that field and the constant epistemological questioning demanded by that (Bourdieu, 1998).

Reflexivity is an important influence to the present study for two reasons. Firstly, I agree with Bourdieu that the study of the academic world is a valuable focus for sociological study in that it allows important epistemological questioning concerning the production of knowledge. Who are the producers of knowledge? And based on their social positions what are their particular interests and motivations? I am less convinced by his belief that such a reflexive sociology will lead towards a more ‘truly’ *scientific* investigation of the social world. However, an understanding of the social conditions of production of knowledge can certainly do more to strengthen the case for a more secure foundation for sociological work than to simply adhere to the more common scientific precepts of ‘objectivity’. Secondly, a reflexive analysis of the social position of the researcher is important for a fuller understanding of any sociological research and this will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Before moving on to discuss in more detail how Bourdieu’s work will be used within this project, I will deal with some of the criticisms that have been made of his approach to sociological analysis and highlighting potential areas of difficulty with the use of his analytical framework in this study.

## **Critiques of Bourdieu's Sociology**

The first chapter of *Homo Academicus* is entitled 'A Book for Burning', a sentiment which reflects Bourdieu's concern that the role he plays as 'informant' on the power structures of the academic world and of exposing the strategies and profits guiding the interests of the 'pure' or disinterested profession, might incite outrage in the academic community or within the cultural 'orthodoxy' in general. This may have been the case in France but for the rest of the world it has been a book largely ignored rather than ceremoniously burned in a fit of indignation. It has had little infiltration within the literature on higher education and the university system. Exceptions include (Huber, 1990; Delamont and Parry, 1997). There has also been a limited influence on the sociology of science (Bassett, 1996). Despite the lack of widespread use of his analytical framework, however, his work is often cited.

There are certainly few studies which have attempted to replicate a similar type of analysis in a different national context. A number of book reviews were written (Collins, 1989; McGee, 1990; Smith, 1989; Jenkins, 1989). For the most part they praise the book for its insightful study and methods of analysis but are critical of the density of the language and the difficult style of the text. There is little outrage as to the implications of the disenchantment of the academic world in these reviews (mainly seen to be a parochially French phenomenon). Only Jenkins (1989) links his critiques of *Homo Academicus* to the work of Bourdieu generally.



There is now, however, a widespread use of and interest in his work with many edited books and critical appreciation's (Calhoun et al., 1993; Jenkins, 1992; Robbins, 1991; Hage, 1994). There are many issues raised in these texts which question some of the basic premises and concepts used in Bourdieu's work. I will discuss some of these, which are pertinent to the use that will be made of Bourdieu's work in the present study.

The first issue concerns the idea of 'structure' or 'field' which simultaneously seems to cover a wide variety of social arrangements from 'small regularities through to massive institutions' (Grenfell and James, 1998). Similarly, it is not always clear how a particular 'field' is defined. Part of Bourdieu's form of analysis is to look at the boundaries between fields and the means by which they interrelate. However, it is not always clear, given Bourdieu's insistence that it is necessary to bracket the common sense (doxic) or semi-scientific categorisations of the social world, exactly how 'fields' should be analysed. For example, one can talk of the 'academic field', the 'university field' and the 'intellectual field'. At the same time there can be sub-fields such as the 'philosophy field' and the 'biology field' but can the social relations and groupings of a sub-specialisms of biology also count as a sub-field and where can you draw the line? Obviously, for Bourdieu these 'fields' are not fixed and indeed, the changing boundaries and definitions are the main subject of sociological study. However, it is not entirely clear how one can make the argument for the existence of a particular field. This process also seems tautological in that a field is defined as a space where there is a social struggle for symbolic capital and the forms of capital for which agents compete is defined by the field. Likewise it can be

argued, that since anything can be defined as symbolic capital then nothing (or anything) can be discovered.

...symbolic capital is circularly defined so that whatever one acquires by one's social behaviour can be tautologically reencoded in terms of symbolic capital... Everything from accumulating monetary capital to praise for being burned at the stake automatically counts as symbolic capital. To say that whatever people do they do for social profit does not tell us anything if profit is defined as whatever people do in a given society. (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993: 42)

The problem, claim Dreyfus and Rabinow, is that firstly, Bourdieu must give up the notion that the struggle for symbolic capital is the sum total of what constitutes human beings and the social world and secondly, that he must abandon the claim to be doing 'scientific sociology'. There can be no 'objective', scientific position from which the sociologist can speak, or can illuminate the 'true' motivations behind social action which does not simply claim 'scientific (and therefore symbolic) profits' for the sociologist.

This problematic leads on to the issue of dispositions (*habitus*) and the extent to which the 'natural bent' driving the motivation of agents is conscious or unconscious. The awareness of the determinations of their actions may only be partly experienced by agents such that it is semi-conscious. Bourdieu argues that agents have an understanding and attach meanings to their action in the social world, which is legitimate, but for him this is only one part of the truth of the social world. Interviews with social agents, therefore, offer insightful discourse on a particular point of view but it is a 'point of view' and the social scientist must uncover the forces which are driving the discourse (the

struggles and strategies within the field(s) within which the agent is positioned). The scientist must provide a point of view on a point of view.

Brubaker (1993) argues that there is a need to understand a possible 'stratified' account of different habituses such that we might understand how the sociological habitus relates to the primary habitus of social origin and educational background. Similarly, I would raise the question in terms of the idea of an 'academic habitus'. Should this be analysed as a 'second order' form of habitus or analysed alongside the primary determinations of habitus proper?

Bourdieu's sociological project and his central concepts of field, habitus and symbolic capital are not without their contradictions and problems. However, Brubaker (1993) puts forward three major defences of Bourdieu's sociological project. Firstly, he argues, that the central concepts used by Bourdieu, namely, field, habitus and symbolic capital are not supposed to be 'precise and unambiguous' (Brubaker, 1993). As Bourdieu's theory as practice suggests, these concepts should be continuously verified empirically. Secondly, Bourdieu's own work is situated within a particular intellectual field of struggles and strategies and he must, therefore, be understood as operating within a particular context, at any given time.

Bourdieu's sociology is not wholly context free (or objectively positioned). It is intrinsically a part of the social space but it is a sociology which he intends to have consequences. It is dynamic in its attempt to disturb taken for granted common sense

sociological notions, to take part in the 'classification struggles' to alter the 'principles of a sociological vision of the world' and therefore, 'alter the world itself'. His 'practical strategy' ultimately is to change 'our way of thinking and seeing' (Brubaker, 1993). But this can only be achieved by a practical reading of Bourdieu's texts or an appropriation of the sociological habitus or dispositions that have produced the intellectual work.

To this end, I will appropriate Bourdieu's form of analysis and sociological vision to study the 'academic field' in England during the late 1990s. The central concern of this thesis is the changing conditions of academic work and academic identity within the English university system, principally in response to significant policy changes, especially the introduction of the RAE. How Bourdieu's framework for analysis will contribute to an understanding of these changes will now be discussed.

### **The English Academic Field: a relational analysis**

Bourdieu has sketched a research program and provided some of the tools for analysis that could fruitfully be applied to the dynamics of other university systems. For example, the on-going restructuring of the English university system could be analysed in terms of a changing field of play, centring around new forms of competition for research rankings and new mechanisms for accumulating cultural capital. Such an analysis could also focus on the changing nature of the academic habitus as the new forms of competition become internalised as new dispositions and practices by new generations of academics. (Bassett, 1996: 522)

Bourdieu claims that his analysis of social relations at any given point in space and time (e.g the French university system in the 1960s), although particular to that context, is also

a model which aspires to represent 'universal validity' (Bourdieu, 1998). It is possible, therefore, to transfer his form of analyses to other national university systems and study them in their particularity whilst at the same time seeing in the differences a notion of 'collective histories' (Bourdieu, 1998). A study of the English university system therefore would represent a particular 'case' of the possible but would share commonalities with other national systems.

In the previous chapter, research evidence was presented on the academic profession from a variety of national contexts and from a wide range of sociological and analytical frameworks. I would like to discuss the comparisons and points of departure between this work and that of Bourdieu, before outlining the way in which Bourdieu's framework will be used in the present study.

In comparison with studies carried out on the cultures of the disciplines, including the sciences (e.g. Becher, 1989), there are issues raised which reflect some of Bourdieu's work, such as the importance of recognition within the academic world. But the fundamentally essentialist claims made by Becher (1989) are antithetical to a relational (rather than substantialist) analysis of disciplinary knowledge and its social conditions of production. Two important objections are made by Huber (1990) to Becher's work which indicate its shortcomings in comparison to a sustained analysis of the wider structural conditions which influence the development of disciplinary cultures.

It is, I think, extremely helpful to identify patterns like Bernstein's 'collection versus integration code in the teaching/learning arrangements or Becher's

‘hard/pure or soft/applied’ matrix in the realm of research, and to discover many other traits of the culture from the hierarchies and division of labour down to the conventions of communication and publication clustered around them. But, first, why are the patterns the way they are? Does the subject alone really dictate whether the knowledge communities are convergent/tightly knit or divergent/loosely knit in their work, urban or rural in their outlook, etc.?... My second objection is that there are traits associated with the disciplinary cultures which cannot plausibly be connected only with the epistemological characteristics of the knowledge domains. (Huber, 1990: 242)

Becher’s (1989) work, therefore, does provide an interesting analysis of specific principles of hierarchization within academic research work such as pure/applied and hard/soft which can be used to understand the principles of differentiation of research work in English universities. However, as Huber (1990) suggests, too much explanatory power is given to the cognitive dimensions of the disciplines to explain the social organisation and ‘traits’ of individuals within those disciplines. Attention must be given then firstly, to the wider social and organisational forces which impinge on the development of the disciplines and secondly, to the wider social background of academics, or *habitus* in Bourdieu’s terminology, to explain motivations and trajectories.

Becher’s research does, however, provide detailed analysis of research activities in British and American universities which may provide a starting point for the specific principles of hierarchization which constitute the production of research in English universities (both across and within disciplines). This is also true for the work of Halsey (1995) and his comprehensive study of the British academic profession and the changes that have occurred over the last 20-30 years. Halsey (1995) has analysed the changing demographics of academic staff, including the conditions of academic work and forms of autonomy which, he argues, has resulted in a proletarianization of academic labour. He

characterises the academic profession as differentiated and “as a loosely knit array of hierarchical status groups seeking honour and reputation mainly from each other” (Halsey, 1995: 169). This differentiation, as discussed in the previous chapter, would be in terms of institutions and disciplines and would be compatible with a Bourdieuan analysis of principles of hierarchization.

Halsey (1992) also in his analysis of the loss of autonomy of academics from the control and monitoring of central government, argues that academics above all feel the ‘melancholy consequences of disapprobation’ (Halsey, 1995: 169). In the struggle over the conditions of ‘value’ of academic activities there appears to be a sense of loss. It is this struggle over the construction of ‘value’ (symbolic capital), value especially in terms of academic research production, which is a central concern of the present study.

In contrast to the anti-institutional feeling that resulted from worsening conditions of work and career prospects for academics, which Bourdieu theorised contributed to the involvement of some students and staff in the May protests in France in 1968, there has been relatively little protest from the British academics. There is evidence, however, of a “deep bitterness” (Halsey, 1995: 270). This bitterness accompanied by a change in the ‘structure of feeling’ within academic work (Sidaway, 1997) will also be explored in the present study. This will be theorised as a disenchantment with the academic ‘illusio’. The academic ‘game’ is uncovered to reveal the base skeleton of interests and strategies oriented towards RAE criteria and ‘competition for research rankings’.

Much of the evidence and analysis of British academia given by Halsey (1995) is comparable with Bourdieu's work in *Homo Academicus*. For example, he provides statistics on the social trajectory of academics given their social background, schooling and qualifications and particularly attendance at Oxbridge. He finds strong links between social background, schooling and academic trajectories. For example, of the Professors sampled, 13.3% were from manual class backgrounds and 86.7% from service/intermediate class backgrounds. From the other ranks of academics sampled, 17.2% were from manual class backgrounds and 82.8% from service/intermediate class backgrounds. Bourdieu's analysis of the relationship between habitus and field is concerned with the trajectory of agents from manual and/or rural backgrounds compared with upper class and/or urban social backgrounds. Bourdieu found that agents from professional backgrounds were more likely to enter the professional disciplines such as medicine and law whereas within the sciences there were more staff of lower social origin. Similarly Bourdieu and Halsey are both concerned with the political beliefs of academics located in different positions in the university system.

Finally, I will make some comments on the issue of power and decision-making which forms the central basis of much of the work on the organisational structures (see chapter two) of universities (Becher, 1987; Bush, 1998). Bourdieu's analysis of power within social fields, as already discussed, is concerned with the accumulation of forms of symbolic capital, social, cultural and economic. The determination of these forms of capital which are 'symbolic' or apportion symbolic value to the beholders is not fixed but is a constant site of struggle. Bourdieu argues, therefore, that traditional studies of power



as individual decision-makers misses the point of the diversity of ways and means by which (symbolic) power is actualised within a field.

In fact, nobody knows any longer who the subject of the final decision is. This is true when you study business firms which function as fields, so that the place of decision is everywhere and nowhere (this as opposed to the illusion of the 'decision-maker' who is at the basis of numerous case studies on power). (Bourdieu, 1994b: 92)

A substantial part of the research evidence on the English university system from the studies discussed in chapter two may be used alongside an analysis based on Bourdieu's work. Although this would entail a radical questioning of any taken for granted categories such as 'profession' and 'decision-makers'. Following Bourdieu's approach, however, does necessitate a radical approach to analysing the university system (or field). I shall now outline some of the ways in which his sociological approach will be utilised in the present study.

The present study is concerned with the English university system at the end of the 1990s, the changing conditions of academic work and the principles governing the recognition and evaluation of that work. Critically for this study is the importance of research activities within academia and the means by which value and recognition is granted for research work. The primary focus of this study surrounds the responses and reactions of universities and academics to the operation of the RAE.

Much of the literature written on the impacts of the RAE (see Chapter two) identifies a number of ways in which it has impacted on the disciplinary and institutional

organisation of academic work. This included, firstly, changes in institutional practices towards a more managerial system. Secondly, changes to the processes of knowledge production and the organisation of research activities. Thirdly, changes to the process of academic work and academic identity. However, the extensive study of the organisation of the disciplines and the organisation of universities finds a diverse social and cultural organisation across and within disciplines (Becher, 1989). Similarly the organisation across and within institutions is equally diverse (Becher and Kogan, 1992). Literature on the academic profession within the U.K. also shows an increasing process of differentiation between individuals positioned within different disciplines and different institutions (Halsey, 1992). In order to study the influence of policies such as the RAE, therefore, it is imperative that it be studied, not as a one way determining process on policies and practices within institutions, but as a more dynamic process of interaction between institutions and individuals, or structure and agency (Trowler, 1998).

Bourdieu's framework of analysis which I have discussed throughout this chapter, particularly in relation to his own study of the French academic system, offers a means of re-thinking the study of academics and the university system within the UK and for investigating the part played by the introduction of the RAE in shaping the practices and processes within universities.

Bourdieu's analytical framework allows a re-orientation of research questions. For Bourdieu, the primary means of operation of a social field is the struggle for classifications over what serves as *symbolic capital* within that field. Principles of

differentiation determine the social positions of agents within the field and their struggle to accumulate forms of symbolic capital either in order to substantiate their position within the field or to subvert the status quo by challenging the principal forms of evaluation. Important questions to be asked, therefore, in relation to the UK University system are:

1. What are the main principles of differentiation within the UK academic field?
2. What are the main forms of capital?
3. What role does the RAE play in determining and/or reinforcing the principles of differentiation?

The precise definition of the academic field (structures) is not, however, amenable to straightforward categorisation. This research project is not looking at the whole university system but deals with a number of case studies of university departments. The structural influences bearing upon those departments are multiple, for example, those of the *institutional field* and the *disciplinary field*. It is possible, therefore, to talk about the *Biology field* or the *Sociology field* alongside the wider *academic field*. Within each of these disciplinary fields, it is also possible to talk of a *research field*. These university departments are subject to the influences of the principles of differentiation governing all of these fields. The actual boundaries of these fields are not fixed but it is the issue of struggles over inclusion and exclusion is what defines them. The central question, therefore, is what role does the RAE play in influencing the principles of differentiation within particular fields.

The issues raised in Chapter Two, such as, the changing institutional processes (more managerial or collegial), changes to the production of disciplinary knowledge and changes to the process of academic work and academic identity, can be addressed in a new light. For example, as well as looking at the question of changing institutional processes towards more managerial forms of decision making, I will also investigate the classification struggles over decisions on RAE submissions, research organisation and decisions over research active and non research active staff. Likewise, I will study the classifications of knowledge production within each particular discipline and the key principles of differentiation of academic and research work in university departments. The framework of analysis of this thesis can be outlined in the following way:

1. Investigation of the managerial, organisational and ideational structures (as evidenced in the discourse and practices of academics in different disciplines and institutions).
2. Investigation of RAE submissions and research policies within institutions and departments.
3. Key principles of differentiation of academic work and research work within different disciplines and different institutions.
4. Academic habitus and academic trajectories within different disciplines and different institutions.

I am interested in how institutions and agents within the academic field struggle to position themselves within the multiplicity of scales of evaluation and hierarchies. To

determine, therefore, what are the principles of hierarchization within the academic field and the forms of symbolic capital operative within that field, particularly with regard to research activity. Central to this is an understanding of the 'academic habitus' and the means by which agents struggle to accumulate forms of capital based on the conditions of possibility of their social position within the hierarchy. Two key principles of division within the academic field are the institution and the discipline. Any understanding of an 'academic habitus' will therefore be dependent on the particular institutional and disciplinary location of the agents. For this reason, I chose particular 'cases' (or 'instances of the possible') within which to base my study of the academic field and the structural organisation of research activities. The aim of this research, therefore, is not to study the whole academic field but a number of university departments, which can be seen as particular 'cases of the possible' (Bourdieu, 1989) within the academic system. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these 'cases' were chosen and how this methodology fits with a Bourdieuan analysis.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of habitus has also been used by Plato and others (Grenfell and James, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> When reading this chapter, I was reminded of R.D Laing's book 'Knots'. A variant on this for Bourdieu's claim on academic (dis) interest might be:

I am not interested in being interested,

I am interested only in being disinterested,

You are interested in the interestingness of my disinterestedness,

And I am interested only in being (disinterestedly) interesting.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### **A Collective Case Study of University Departments through multi-level analysis**

Thus, at the risk of shocking both the rigorous methodologist and the inspired hermeneutic scholar, I would willingly say that the interview can be considered a sort of spiritual exercise, aiming to obtain, through forgetfulness of self, a true transformation of the view we take of others in the ordinary circumstances of life. The welcoming disposition, which leads one to share the problem of the respondent, the capacity to take her and understand her just as she is, in her distinctive necessity, is a sort of intellectual love: a gaze which consents to necessity in the manner of the 'intellectual love of God', that is to say of the natural order, which Spinoza held to be the supreme form of knowledge. (Bourdieu, 1996b: 24)

The methodology which guided the research work in this project, will form the basis of this chapter and the specific issues related to taking universities and academics as 'objects' of study will be discussed. The work of Bourdieu will be used as a source for raising particular questions on the research process rather than as setting down any procedures or methodological practices.

This project uses a case study approach and I will begin, firstly, by outlining the reasons for this choice of method and the selection of each of the 'cases'. Secondly, I will outline the various means of data collection used in the study, particularly the process of interviewing. Thirdly, I will discuss issues and questions raised by taking universities and academics as 'objects' of study. Finally I will raise again the issue of reflexivity that was

discussed in the previous chapter and demonstrate the importance of this concept in the research process.

## **Case Study Methodology**

I want to begin by discussing the debate over epistemology and methodology within social science before explaining the choice of case study methods for the current study. The debate over quantitative and qualitative research methods in the social sciences is central to sociological investigation. The question of whether different methodologies are to some extent compatible or completely separate has been a dividing issue between social scientists (Bryman, 1988). Bell and Newby (1977) argue in favour of a 'methodological pluralism' that distinguishes between the idea of methodology as opposed to methodolatory (Gouldner, 1967). They argue against a form of exclusiveness that allows social scientists to operate only within one methodological 'paradigm' and follow meticulously the rules of any particular method.

Alvin Gouldner has a brilliant discussion of 'Method versus methodolatory in his *Enter Plato* (1967). He articulates the basic dilemma between 'intuitive insight with enriching novelty' and 'a reliance upon a disciplined method with controllable and reliable results'. He stresses that 'without method there is no reliable way of solving competing claims to truth' (p.337). That is indeed our position and we would say that that is just how sociology currently is. Gouldner notes that with method alone we all too easily sink into ritualism, and in what is a precise indictment of much positivistic sociology he notes that 'it sacrifices the venturesome but chancy insight for the security of controllable routine,... He warns that it is very easy for reason to become 'methodolatorous' - compulsively preoccupied with a method of knowing, which it exalts ritualistically and quite apart from a serious appraisal of its success in producing knowledge' (p.338). (Bell and Newby, 1977: 17)



Bell and Newby (1977) are arguing in favour of the more 'chancy' results that one is likely to get from qualitative enquiry as opposed to the more formalistic routines of positivist sociology, which is primarily quantitative. They were trying to address the balance of enquiry, therefore, at a time when qualitative sociology was under-utilised and less influential. In the 80s and 90s when qualitative methods of enquiry were more popular within sociology the question becomes whether these different methods of social investigation constitute separate paradigms or indeed whether they can operate as complementary research strategies. Bryman (1988) frames it as a question over whether the basis of the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is one of 'epistemology or technique'? In other words, are they two mutually exclusive means of constructing knowledge (epistemology) or are they simply different strategies and techniques for gathering data (techniques) which could usefully be combined?

A number of social researchers would argue the latter case both as a means of adopting multiple strategies (Burgess, 1982) and using multiple methods (Denzin, 1978). Using the concept of 'triangulation' Denzin (1978) advocates the use of a variety of methods to explore social reality in-depth and from a variety of perspectives. He argues that the use of multiple methods should not be seen solely as a means of using one method, for example interviews, to provide further validation of, for example, responses given in a questionnaire survey. But instead the "combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation". (Denzin and Lincoln,

1998: 4). The key to the idea of combining methods of social research, therefore, is as a means of strengthening and broadening the terms of the investigation. Decisions on method should proceed from the sociological issues under study and not as a rigid following of methodological procedure.

Bourdieu (1992) is likewise antipathetic to what he terms ‘methodological monotheism’, i.e. the insistence on only one methodological approach. Bourdieu sees this singular approach to studying the social world as more about the blinkered needs of the researcher than achieving epistemological veracity.

Rigid adherence to this or that one method of data collection will define membership in a ‘school’, the symbolic interactionists being recognisable for instance by the cult of participant observation, ethnomethodologists by their passion for conversation analysis... no more than a disguised way of making a virtue out of necessity, of feigning to dismiss, to ignore in an active way, what one is ignorant of in fact... I will say only that we must beware of all sectarian dismissals which hide behind excessively exclusive professions of faith. We must try in every case, to mobilise all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable, given the definition of the object and the practical conditions of data collection. (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 227)

Bourdieu is seeking, therefore, to break the necessary link between epistemology and methodology and is suggesting that use should be made of “as wide a range of methodologies as is appropriate to the research question in hand”, what has been termed ‘methodological polytheism’ (Inglis, Stockman et al., 1999: 5).

In this project, a ‘case study’ approach to data collection was chosen. In light of the points made about methodological monotheism or polytheism, case study research is an

interesting one since it does not prescribe any particular form of methodology. Indeed, the idea of a 'case' is central to most types of social investigation, although it has been argued that "the term 'case' and the various terms linked to it are not well defined" (Ragin and Becker, 1992: 1). The idea of a case study is often associated with qualitative methods but any form of investigation can be used, from questionnaires to statistical analysis or from interviews to participant observation. As Stake (1998) argues, case study is concerned with choosing (and defining) the particular 'object' to be studied and not the methodology.

Stake (1998) identifies three types of case study, an intrinsic case study, an instrumental case study and a collective case study. Choosing between these different forms of case study highlights the epistemological questions raised by this approach, namely what can we learn from the intensive study of one particular case? Intrinsic case study implies that the researcher has an interest in a particular case for itself, as an interesting instance of a particular setting or problem. Instrumental case study on the other hand, is concerned to study a particular case as a means of "providing insight into an issue or refinement of a theory" (Stake, 1998: 88). An example of this kind of study would be Becker et al's investigation of medical students (Becker, Geer et al., 1961). Collective case study is simply an extension of instrumental case study but with a larger number of cases from which it may be possible to develop a more in-depth understanding of an issue or further aid in theorising.

A central epistemological concern of the case study form of investigation is the extent to which generalisations can be made from the study of one particular instance. An intrinsic case study may have as its aim only to present the singular example of one school or one religious group and leave conclusions as to the wider applicability of the analysis to further study. Collective case study, on the other hand, may serve to provide unifying themes and present analysis in the form of theoretical articulation which has implications beyond the singular case (Burgess, Pole et al., 1994).

Collective case study is the one that will be used in the present study. Before giving the details of how ‘cases’ were chosen and investigated, however, I would like to raise two central issues which are pertinent to this study. Firstly, given the interest in the work of Bourdieu and the particular questions he raises concerning the link between theory and practice, a relational form of analysis and a mistrust of methodological prescription, I would like to discuss how a case study analysis may fit with these concerns. Secondly, I would like to raise the question of how it is possible to define a particular ‘case’ in the sense that one can capture a discrete entity. It is not simply that singular ‘cases’ also have subsets (e.g. a school might have different departments and different groups of teachers and pupils) and are “situational and influenced by happenings of many kinds” (Stake, 1998: 91). It is more fundamentally whether in certain forms of investigation one can ever identify a discrete entity which can be identified as a ‘case’ or whether the on-going classification and identification of boundaries of a ‘case’ by the researcher should also be key to the investigation.

A case study approach is not prescriptive about the methods to be used in any social investigation but can be conducted using many different forms of methodology. Although most case studies may opt to use one particular approach, either quantitative or qualitative and specific methods, either questionnaire or participant observation, it is not linked directly to any 'school' such as positivist or interactionist. In principle, therefore, case study can potentially use many methods and therefore would fit with Bourdieu's idea of methodological pluralism.

Whether a case study approach may be compatible with a relational analysis, however, is a more complex question. Grenfell and James (1998) argue that a Bourdieuan analysis should be conducted at a number of different levels. This would be as follows;

1. Analyse the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power (e.g. the way teaching as a profession is defined in relation to other professions).
2. Map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority of which the field is a site (e.g the way professionalism is expressed in a group of individual teaching establishments).
3. Analyse the habitus of agents; the system of dispositions they have acquired (e.g. how individuals act 'professionally').

Grenfell and James (1998) argue that although all levels must be considered it is not always 'methodologically possible to present analyses on each level

simultaneously' (Grenfell and James, 1998). For this reason, they consider a case study methodology to be an important means of being able to study the interaction of habitus and field in empirical terms. An example of this would be institutional case studies which:

...in keeping with Bourdieu's theory of practice, can be studied as structured (organisationally, managerially, ideationally) and structuring (in terms of the constitutive effect on local activities) structures. They also have inter as well as intra structural relations. They offer the possibility of mapping the 'field' and positions within it. (Grenfell and James, 1998: 174)

The problem that a Bourdieuan analysis might have with case study would be precisely the capturing of 'unique' cases, which limit the ability to 'map the field', i.e. look at the system as a whole. The 'field' is defined as a social space within which individuals operate with varying degrees of symbolic 'capital' (social, economic, and material). In order to study the field it is necessary to map the various positions of power and influence that define this field. In looking at the university field, therefore, it would be necessary to locate all institutions in positions of dominance and influence.

However, as Grenfell argues, the possibility inherent in case study is to look in detail at 'the complex picture of multitudinal layering and interconnecting links' (Grenfell and James, 1998). Even within a case study, therefore, it is possible to capture the complexity of the academic 'field' as played out in the specific structuring operations within particular institutions. For these reasons, therefore, I would argue that a case study approach can be a useful means of investigation and compatible with the concerns and issues raised by Bourdieu.

In terms of the second question, on the extent to which 'cases' can ever be defined in any straightforward manner, I would argue that in the present study it was necessary not only to have a multi-site study but also a multi-level analysis of these different 'cases'. This would also entail a continual reassessment of the boundaries of the 'cases' under investigation. Ragin (1992) outlines a process of 'casing' (as a research operation) which involves determining the focus of one's study from the most general level to the most specific. The process demonstrates how the levels of social analysis can be multiple as well as the number of cases:

- (1) The most general level
- (2) A subset (historical, developmental and conceptual)
- (3) Theoretically motivated narrowing of empirical focus
- (4) Selection of main empirical samples (cases)
- (5) Selection of empirical evidence to be collected
- (6) Narrowing of empirical focus (3) in the service of theoretical articulation

Source: Ragin and Becker (1992) What is a case?

For the present study, although the main empirical samples (cases) are university departments, these cannot be explored in isolation from the other 'cases', as follows;

(3) Two institutions, Six university departments, Three disciplines and approximately  
Sixty academics

This illustrates that case studies cannot be viewed as discrete entities. The multiple structural levels and interconnections of these different levels must be an integral part of the analysis of any case. This is why thinking of a 'field' (of relations) may be more appropriate. Although, as discussed in the previous chapter, the defining of different 'fields', such as an academic field or disciplinary field is in itself a process of theoretical articulation. It must also be reiterated that the linking of theory and practice as a step by step process, as illustrated above, whereby a theory is developed and then tested empirically is incompatible with Bourdieu's declaration of theory as practice. So too, in the present study, interconnections of theory and method will be assumed throughout the process rather than treating them as separate stages.

The empirical chapters of this study will be presented in the form of separate disciplines, but the department is nominated as the primary 'case'. The academic department would seem to be the most appropriate level at which to base the analysis since it is here that many of the other levels intersect. Individuals within university departments constitute and are constituted by both the disciplinary and institutional structures. It is their struggle to articulate and position themselves within these differing structural relations which will form the basis of this investigation. The individuals in each department can also be nominated as 'cases'.



As Bourdieu (1984) suggests, the field of play is constructed by the struggles and strategies adopted by individuals. Within the academic field, given the intersection of different 'fields' (disciplinary field, university field and research field), individuals are located within multiple positions and this can imply different strategies and struggles that may not always be clearly defined and may conflict rather than complement each other. This may lead to a great deal of uncertainty for individual academics as they attempt to manoeuvre themselves through the complex normative and operational structures of both the discipline and the department and/or institution.

### **Selection of Institutions, Departments and Academic Staff**

A number of factors guided the choice of how many universities and which universities should be studied. It was important that the chosen universities should provide a comparison of different kinds of institutions. Thus an 'old' (pre 1992) university and 'new' (post 1992) university were chosen and it was decided that these institutions should differ according to their place on the university hierarchy, specifically with regard to their research rating. However, the picture of research activity given by the research ratings of institutions was made more complex when the specific ratings of departments (or 'Units of Assessment', as was used in the RAE) were inspected. Thus, low rated departments could be found in very highly rated institutions and vice versa with low rated institutions housing very research active departments.

The decision was taken, therefore, to select those institutions where comparable departments could be found. Departments of the same discipline were chosen so that disciplinary research cultures could be compared across institutions but within departments that were rated differently in terms of research activity. An important criterion, therefore, was the existence of corresponding disciplines within the institutions to be studied.

The main criteria for choosing institutions were firstly, 'type' of institution whether 'old' or 'new', secondly, whether they had corresponding disciplinary departments and thirdly, whether those disciplinary departments were comparably different in terms of research rating. Following these criteria a variety of comparisons could then be made. The focus was on differences in terms of institutional type, differences in terms of discipline and differences in terms of research activity/rating within departments.

After careful consideration of a number of possible institutions at which to base the study, two universities were chosen. The decision was taken to study three departments at each of the two institutions. This gave a broad comparable range of academic disciplines, one Science, one Social Science and one Humanities. Other academic subject areas such as Medicine or Technology or Business studies could have been selected but it was decided that the range of disciplines chosen, which of necessity had to be limited, reflected a broad spectrum and could be found across most, if not all, universities. By

comparison, not all institutions have a Medical department or a Business studies department.

The departments chosen for study at each institution were within the same disciplines. In each university the Biology, Sociology and English departments were selected for investigation. These represented comparable units of study in the sense that the same disciplines were chosen, but they represent very different units of study primarily in terms of institutional location and research rating.

The two universities chosen were Golden County University (GCU) and Royal County University (RCU). For reasons of confidentiality it is impossible to give the level of detail which is desirable in an in-depth study. For example, the RAE rating of each department is important for the study but this information cannot be given (except as an approximate indication) because it would make it easier to identify these institutions. Where necessary characteristics from other universities may be appropriated so as to lessen the chance of institutions being identified.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

The data collected in this study is primarily qualitative and is drawn from transcripts of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key administrators within the institutions, heads of department and academic staff members within each department. A total of 35

interviews were conducted at each institution across the three departments (70 interviews in total). The sample of interviewees included Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors, Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and Researchers. Individuals were sometimes away on research leave or unable to be interviewed for a number of reasons. However, representatives from each of these categories were interviewed in all departments. An outline of the individuals interviewed and their status within departments is given in Appendix 3.

Since the study operates on a number of levels (institutional, departmental and individual) a lot of time was spent negotiating access at each of these levels. Pro Vice Chancellors were contacted initially to secure access to the institution and the heads of department to gain access to departments. Once interviews had been conducted with Pro Vice Chancellors and heads of department and permission had been given to carry out the study, a large amount of time was spent negotiating interview times and dates with individuals from each of the six departments. In the first instance letters were sent to all academic members of staff in the department. The letter gave brief details about the research project, an assurance that permission had been given to carry out the study and a request to conduct an interview. These letters were followed up by telephone calls a few days later to make initial contact with individuals and to make a further request for an interview.

Interviews with members of staff were generally carried out in their office although on a few occasions interviews were conducted in laboratories or in separate rooms which were

quieter and more conducive to tape recording. Most of the interviews were recorded on tape but where this was impossible due to noise problems or the interviewee wishing not to be recorded, notes were taken during the interview. The average time for an interview was forty five minutes although this was quite varied with some interviews lasting about twenty minutes and others up to one and half hours or longer.

Observational notes were also taken while attending a number of institutional and departmental research committee meetings. In some departments I attended meetings regularly, but in others access was not permitted. Attendance at committee meetings was made difficult because some departments did not have formal research committee meetings and often where they did occur they were rather ad hoc, informal and spontaneous. In some, access was simply denied to me but in one instance it was agreed that the proceedings (an edited version) could be tape recorded. Recorded minutes of committee meetings were also made available in some instances.

Attendance at these committee meetings was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, they provided more insight into the organisation of the institution/department; secondly, they provided greater insight into the research policy of the institution/department; and thirdly, they helped me to identify those individuals who were directly involved in the decision-making process of the institution/department.

When visiting institutions and departments I also took fieldnotes which gave detailed information on such things as the individuals I had spoken to that day, feelings I had

about the interview and how successful or not I felt the interview had been. These fieldnotes were useful for details on the location of offices of members of staff, laboratory space and work space allocated to different members of staff, the physical organisation of departments and the social space used within departments. These substantive fieldnotes (Burgess, 1984) helped to give a more detailed description of the university and department environment. They also provided a record of the conversations and informal interaction that I had had with university staff. Often these informal interactions could be insightful in terms of giving an understanding of how I was perceived by individuals within departments.

Given that the interview data forms the primary basis of the research work, however, I will discuss in detail the process of interviewing, including the format and the structure of the interview.

### **Interviewing as a Process of Understanding**

The differences between the structured interview and unstructured interview have been well documented (Burgess, 1984; Silverman, 1993). In structured interviewing respondents are asked the exact same questions in ordered sequence whereas in unstructured interviewing, questioning is much less directive, if at all, and informants are encouraged to talk openly. A distinction is made between 'respondent' and 'informant' whereby a 'respondent' is an anonymous member of a large group who provides 'raw' data for the research to interpret. An informant, on the other hand, is a distinct person

with some unique insights into a particular social situation, to contribute (Platt, 1981). I will use the term 'interviewee' as suggested by Platt (1981), so that the respondent/informant difference may be maintained.

The type of interviewing used in this study was that which is referred to commonly as semi-structured interviewing. This method ensures that a certain amount of structure exists as to the topics or issues which the interviewer would like addressed but this is executed in a more flexible manner with interviewees being encouraged to talk with little prompting from the interviewer. Similarly, the order of questioning and the content of the interview may be different for each individual case. Given the loose parameters set by the interviewer the actual conduct of the interview may be tailored to the individual characteristics, interests and specialist knowledge of the interviewee. The idea of interviews as 'conversations with a purpose' (cited in, Burgess, 1984) is a useful one. In contrast to the structured interview, which positions the interviewer and interviewee within a rigid question and answer structure, the unstructured or semi-structured interview as 'conversation with a purpose' implies not only that the content and process of interviewing may vary between interviews but also that the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is less formal and prescribed. Using this approach the interviewer is seen to demonstrate an empathetic understanding of interviewees. A trusting relationship is developed which can elicit more intimate and detailed discussions than would be possible were the interviewer's approach to be more formal.

Bourdieu (1996) in a rare discussion of methodological procedures advocates the interview as a means towards a complete ‘understanding’ of the interviewee. It is the site of the ‘spiritual exercise’ referred to at the beginning of the chapter. Given that the interview is a form of social interaction, there is the possibility of an imposition of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1996b) upon the interviewee by the interviewer.

Bourdieu is concerned that within the interview situation the interviewer does not simply become the “abused object of the researcher’s own world vision” (Fowler, 1996).

Bourdieu wants to ensure, therefore, that the interviewee has the ability to explain and express their own ‘point of view’. The means by which his idea of ‘comprehension’ of the interviewee and the possibility of non-violent communication can be achieved is twofold, firstly in terms of the social proximity of the interviewee and the interviewer and secondly, by a reflexive analysis of the interview situation and their place within it by the interviewer. I shall say a few words about the first point here and the second issue will be discussed in the section dealing with reflexivity in the research process.

Bourdieu (1996) argues that the interviewee and interviewer should be as close as possible to each other in terms of social characteristics such as race, gender, and class. In this way there is a possibility of genuine communication since the interviewer (occupying a similar social role) will have an understanding of the ‘objective position’ (in social space) of the interviewee because it is also their own position. In many of the interviews detailed in Bourdieu’s most recent book (Bourdieu, 1999) the interviewee was known personally to the interviewer. He argues that having a close relationship with the interviewee can lead to better understanding. But he maintains further that “practical



knowledge which comes of proximity and familiarity, (and) not even the deepest preliminary knowledge...could lead to true comprehension if it were not accompanied by an attention to others and openness towards them” (Bourdieu, 1996b)(p.23). Bourdieu is seeking, therefore to avoid as far as possible the misunderstandings and symbolic impositions which can result from the position of ‘social asymmetry’ between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Taking into account these...inherent properties of the interview relationship, we have sought to do all in our power to control their effects (without claiming to eradicate them) or, more precisely, to reduce as much as possible the symbolic violence which is exerted through them. We have tried, therefore, to instigate a relationship of active and methodical listening, as far removed from the laissez-faire of the non-directive interview as from the directiveness of the questionnaire survey. (Bourdieu, 1996b: 19)

In the present study, care was taken to implement the process of active and methodical listening to the extent that interviews were constructed around the interviewee. However, it was not possible to allow the content of the interview to be solely determined by the interviewee because there had to be the possibility of making comparisons between the experiences and perceptions of different interviewees. Furthermore, it was not possible in this study simply to use academics known to myself, although in terms of the Sociologists in the study this was often the case. Difficulties of interviewing colleagues have been documented (Platt, 1976) whereby conflict has arisen over the relationship of colleague and that of researcher especially in relation to the use of data during the project and in writing up the findings. However, the intention to mitigate the possibility of ‘violent imposition’ within this study are discussed in relation to how the interviews were conducted.

Difficulties arose in my own interviews where individuals insisted on asking me about confidential information. In one instance, during an 'informal' meeting with two Professors (one of whom was head of department) they responded to my first request for information by saying "It is not what we can tell you but what you can tell us". In this situation I refused to give forth any information which left a sense of unease in the air. Where possible, then, I have carried on conversations with interviewees but not where this would impinge on the confidentiality of institutions or academics under study. Unstructured or semi-structured interviews do possess specific characteristics which mark them out from normal friendly conversations but at all times these procedural norms can be challenged within interview situations.

The interviews conducted for this project follow the main principles of interactionism (Silverman, 1993). The interviews were open ended in order to achieve a less prescribed investigation of individual accounts and a more in depth exploration of individual viewpoints and of individual perceptions of the social world of the academic department or academic discipline within the university setting. The key features of the interactionist approach are firstly, the importance of developing a *rappport* between interviewer and interviewee which is conducive to a more in-depth type of communication and secondly, the *control* of the interview situation both in terms of form and content, which allows interviewees to talk about what they themselves feel to be important but at the same time allows the interviewer to encourage the interviewee to talk about what is relevant to his/her research. To elicit from the interviewee their own 'point

of view' and to "fully delineate the vantage-point within this world from which they see themselves and the world" (Bourdieu, 1996b: 24). I attempted to allow the 'joy of expression' and interrupt as little as possible the 'density and intensity' of that expression. This was taken to extreme in one particular interview whereby the one and a half hours of recorded interview time consisted entirely of the interviewee talking with absolutely no input from myself as interviewer (except by non-verbal communication). This interviewee remained fairly close to the topic, i.e. his life and work in the department, research and the RAE etc.... but he did so with absolutely no (verbal) prompting from me. However, for the most part, given the interests of the study I asked particular questions which were concerned with the interests of the project.

My interviews were semi-structured, which means that there was a list of topics and issues for discussion to which I could refer and use as prompts for discussion. This list functioned as an aide memoire (Burgess, 1984). An example of this interview schedule is included in Appendix 4. It begins by asking about the research profile of the individual. A lot of detail is requested concerning an individual's research work, including research interests, time spent on research, collaborations with others and publications. I also ask about their specific position within the department, time spent on various tasks, the organisation of the departments, other activities they do within the department/institution, including committee meetings. The questions then address more specifically the organisation of the department, submission for the RAE, involvement in submissions. Interviewees were also asked some direct questions on their knowledge and opinion of the RAE. Finally, they were asked about their views on the differences across institutions

and across their discipline in terms of research activity and the viability of grading institutions and different departments within disciplines.

My approach to interviewing followed many of the key elements outlined by Spradley (1979) in his dissection of the 'ethnographic' interview. I shall go through some of these key elements demonstrating how they were used in the interviews that I conducted. I will begin firstly, by discussing the means by which rapport was built up within interview situations. Secondly, I will discuss in more detail the content of the interviews and the types of questions used to elicit particular types of data, namely descriptive, contrast and structural questions (Spradley, 1979). Thirdly, I will discuss the means by which control over the process and content of the interview was negotiated within the interview itself. Building up rapport within the interview situation is extremely important for the kind of semi-structured interviews conducted for this project. Semi-structured interviews require a lot of input on the part of the individual being interviewed and often the questions can deal with some personal or perhaps sensitive issues for the interviewee. For this reason, therefore, an element of trust has to be developed within the relationship and interviewees must be made to feel that the interviewer can be trusted with the information that they disclose within the interview situation.

This issue was very pertinent to all of the interviews that I carried out since members of staff were often concerned, for example, that the head of department or other individuals might have access to the data. Rapport is important, therefore, to encourage individuals to talk freely and openly about the issues on which they were being asked.

An important starting point in the interview situation is to utilise a number of procedures to help set a more informal tone for the interview. All of my interviews were conducted in the office of the interviewee or a university room or laboratory. These settings are fairly formal in that they are located in a workspace; however, it is on the home ground of the interviewee which should be more relaxing for the interviewee.

Spradley (1979) suggests a number of steps including greetings and introductions; asking friendly questions and giving project and question explanations. All of these steps were utilised in the interviews that I conducted. Academics on the whole are fairly receptive to interviewing and, being used to the process, are fairly relaxed and respond favourably to this kind of friendly interviewing. In one interview transcript I wrote;

Jovial conversation begins with a comparison of the interview recording device with that used on the television series 'The Bill' and a discussion of how the experience seems similar which implies that correspondingly the interviewee might feel interrogated as when being interviewed by a Police Officer.  
(Dr Booth, English, RCU)

This was not always the case, however. My attempt to create a less formal and more open interview situation was sometimes subverted by the difficulties some academics had experienced in the face of pressures associated with the RAE. Despite an air of openness there were many instances when individuals were reluctant to talk about certain issues. Individuals themselves sometimes referred to this tension. At the most extreme, some interviewees simply requested not to be recorded. Reassurance was often sought from me that the transcripts would not be seen by anyone else.

Giving project explanations, however, could be more difficult. In his study of cocktail waitressing, Spradley gives the example of explaining to an interviewee that he simply wants to find out what it is like to work as a waitress, and this is accepted as a project explanation by the interviewee. In my own study of academics a similar type of response to a request for an explanation of the research study would not be accepted with much gratitude. It could in fact be very difficult when academics, especially sociologists, asked for an explanation of the nature of the project because in most cases they wanted the whole story, the hypothesis, the theories being used, early findings etc. One exasperated Pro Vice Chancellor remarked "Well you must have some organisational theories that you are working with?". Mostly I attempted to explain that the project was simply looking at some of the impacts of the RAE on academic departments and that I did not want to explain more than this. I managed to side step issues about findings by explaining the ethics governing the research. In most cases academics felt that they were competent to judge the merits of the project and wanted the legitimacy of their status as academics and their ability to judge to be upheld by me granting them license to scrutinise the project. As Platt (1981) remarks:

One solution to the latter is to point out the likely consequences as a reason for not telling too much; this again entails very conscious role-playing, and may leave an unease in the air about the intellectual legitimacy of the undertaking. An equal feels qualified to judge its intellectual legitimacy, and his acceptance of this is to some extent a condition of willingness to adopt the subordinate role of respondent. To succeed, as textbooks suggest, in concealing one's specific hypotheses is to place oneself in the academically embarrassing situation of possibly appearing to have none. (Platt, 1981: 80)

To refuse an explanation, therefore, can result in a loss of confidence in the research project and in the competence of the researcher. This could have been a very uncomfortable position for me as a research student interviewing senior academics. My approach to this was primarily, as Platt (1981) suggests, by explaining that it is difficult to talk about the research project before the research is completed and to cite the difficulties with ethics and confidentiality.

The interview as conversation, therefore, can mean that the boundaries of what to discuss and the role of the interviewer can be more difficult to manage. This is especially the case where interviewees are skilled at the process of interviewing and furthermore, in the case of academic staff, want to engage in intellectual or conceptual discussions about the project or the themes and topics that the project addresses.

The sense of unease may be further heightened within the interview if a lack of response to project explanations results in the interviewee feeling threatened that perhaps the findings of the research may reflect badly on them. As Platt (1981) suggests;

..., whether they are overtly stated or not, it can be exceedingly embarrassing evidently to have hypotheses that reflect unfavourably on one's respondents, for instance, seeing them as motivated by careerism rather than normative considerations. (Platt, 1981: 80)

The inability of the researcher to divulge more detailed information about the project can result in a loss of trust by the interviewee and s/he may feel that the interviewer is controlling the situation in a way that might be inappropriate. My response to this difficulty was to give question and project explanations only at the beginning of the

interview as far as possible and to use other techniques to build rapport and trust with interviewees. Expressing cultural ignorance, for example, serves a dual purpose of demonstrating to the interviewee the importance and value of the information s/he is giving, placing the interviewer in the subordinate role of 'novice' and in producing more detailed data from the interviewee. Being a research student interviewing senior academics it was fairly easy to project myself as being ignorant of many organisational and academic processes. All of these techniques helped to build rapport and trust within the interview situation and gave a sense of control over the situation back to the interviewee. There were many occasions when I, as interviewer, expressed cultural ignorance about certain academic practices, but these often yield very detailed and enlightening results.

**Dr Lester:** So I think in that sense that the funding bodies and the departments have to take account of how research is actually carried out and not just look entirely for papers with one name on it all appearing in Nature. They have to look at collaborative projects, whether that person can actually interact with scientists within and without their department.

**Interviewer:** So when you say that you would be looking to be either first author or last author on a paper, is there a meaning for both?

**Dr Lester:** Yes there is a great meaning. I think up until now I have always been a first author because I have done the research... and I have used the overall supervisor (Professor X) as the last author because he is the overseer of the project. Now I employ people as postdoctoral and PhD students, because they do the majority of the research they need their name as the first author to imply that and I then take the senior position of being in charge of the project. The problem comes is that in actual fact I haven't stopped doing practical work and I too still have the right to see the paper with my name as first author. And it is highly significant when you look at abstracts for publications, conferences, those sorts of things, as to who's on the author list. And I have been encouraged to try and only put my name, my research group down, to show that we are independent, that we don't require the supervisors name on the paper that they have had an overall view on it...**continues**  
(Dr Lester, Biology, GCU)



However, it is necessary that the interviewer retains a certain amount of control over the process and content of the interview. This can be done by the use of the questions and prompts given in the interview schedule whereby the interviewer can ensure that a selection of the issues and themes are covered within the interview. But direction of the interview process can also be achieved in terms of the types of questioning. Burgess (1984) explains the three types of questions outlined by Spradley (1979) and used in the 'ethnographic interview';

First, descriptive questions which allow informants to provide statements about their activities. Secondly, structural questions which attempt to find out how informants organise their knowledge and, finally, contrast questions which allow informants to discuss the meanings of situations and provide an opportunity for comparisons to take place between situations and events in the informants' world. These particular questions are used at different point in the interview while the interviewer probes for details about the informant and encourages them to discuss situations in their own terms. (Burgess, 1984: 112)

I shall give an example of each of these types of questions to illustrate how they were used in the interviews I conducted. Descriptive questions were plentiful during the course of the interviews but especially at the beginning where most interviewees were asked to describe their role in the department and research interests. Another common question asked interviewees to describe an average week, how they would spend their time. For example, "...is it possible to give a picture of an average week, how much time you spend on..."

Structural questions often related to the institutional or departmental environment of the interviewee and/or the disciplinary community within which the interviewee was situated. Here is an illuminating example of this line of questioning.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel very much part of a certain community though?

**Professor Mulligan:** Yes and no I mean I think yes you do move in certain circles and you can define that by meetings in some ways in that you go to one particular national meeting which is probably the most relevant one and one particular international meeting which is the most relevant international one...continues

**Interviewer:** So there could be a kind of family tree?

**Professor Mulligan:** Oh yeah and it is interesting as well when you look back through publications, you'll search some publications of people and you'll see a name of someone you know and low and behold they'll have worked in the lab of someone you knew from another context and you suddenly realise why they are working on that and this person is working on that because back there x was y's PhD student and you never realised and everything goes backwards and forwards and everyone works with everyone else or someone who knows someone so you know it all gets very complex... continues

(Professor Mulligan, Biology, GCU)

Finally, the 'contrast' questions invite interviewees to make comparisons between different events or situations. Many of the contrast questions that I asked related to the passing of time and the ways in which the university and the department had changed over time. This was especially pertinent to those academics who had been in the same institution and department for perhaps thirty years. Other contrast questions, however, simply related to topics and themes raised by interviewees. For example, I asked for a comparison between the criteria of success used by funding bodies and departmental criteria for success.

**Interviewer:** So success as judged by the Wellcome Trust would that be the same as in the department?

**Dr Lester:** No not exactly.

**Interviewer:** What would the differences be?

**Dr Lester:** Well rumour has it that success for the Wellcome Trust is that you get a paper or two in very highly cited journals like Nature or Cell Science. That combined with the fact, with it being a career development fellowship, that you have developed your career, you've learnt new techniques, new skills, you have broadened your horizons, you have shown that you can work in different environments and that you are productive in those environments. I think with the departments point of view they would look at is this person successful. One certainly they are very interested in money. I think that is, although there is denial of this at the highest levels, I think money really is important. If you can bring in large grants that is what eventually gives departments a huge boost. It is regarded then by people higher up the ladder as being a successful department. As such research papers by themselves don't bring in the grants, don't bring in the money... **continues...**

(Dr Lester, Biology, GCU)

All of these types of questions, therefore, can help to explore in-depth the issues and topics under discussion within interviews. The examples cited demonstrate how questions of this type can yield detailed and insightful responses from interviewees.

The discussion so far refers to general issues around interviewing, the next section looks in more detail at the unique problems raised in having universities and academics as objects of study.

## **Universities and Academics as ‘Objects’ of Study**

The fieldwork raised a number of fundamental dilemmas and problems that were highlighted in the previous section. I would like to expand on a few of these, including firstly, the concern with confidentiality, secondly, the relationship between researcher and researched and thirdly, the ‘academic’ as interviewee.

The concern with confidentiality is certainly not unique to this study but is central to most social science studies dealing with individuals and institutions. However, it is especially pertinent in this study because of the political sensitivities of revealing detailed information on universities and university departments. Both the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor at GCU asked me, during our introductions, the identity of the other institution that I was studying. In reply to my response that this information was confidential the Pro Vice Chancellor said “It is good that you said that otherwise you would not be studying this university”. One Vice Chancellor was very concerned that, given the current competitive environment between institutions, I as a representative of the Sociology department at the University of Warwick would have access to important information about the sociology department at GCU. Vice Chancellors and heads of department were extremely stringent on instructions as to the confidentiality of this information. I agreed that all institutions, departments and individuals should not be named. I also agreed that copies of any intended publications could be scrutinised by a member of the institution or department, who may ask for amendments to be made should any information hint at the identity of the institution, department or individuals. I

am now very concerned not to break the trust of participating individuals. I also had to be very guarded, especially during informal discussions since individuals were curious about other departments. Similarly heads of department might be interested in what members of their department are saying. Therefore, I have to be very careful with information that may identify individuals. Pseudonyms have been used for all individuals as well as the institutions and the 'status' of individuals or any other possibly identifying characteristic.

There are specific difficulties that arise when studying universities. Firstly, they are unique in terms of location, research areas, and well-known individuals and therefore easily identifiable from descriptions. Secondly, the intended readership of possible publications is the academic profession, within which are people who are familiar with many of the characteristics of these individual institutions. Finally, I am an actor in the academic arena (though a relatively unknown one) and therefore, it is possible that academics familiar with me (most probably interviewees) may blow the cover of institutional identity.

In terms of the presentation of this work the issue of confidentiality gives rise to difficulties with the possible descriptions of institutions, departments, disciplines and research topics of individuals. This problem sits uneasily with the ascribed intention of in-depth study accorded by individual case studies. This undoubtedly presents problems for the study that are not easily resolvable.

The issue of the relationship between the researcher and the researched has been discussed in detail in the previous section but I would like to expand on a few points here which are significant for this study.

As a research student interviewing a broad sample of the academic community from Lecturers to Readers to Professors to Pro Vice chancellors, the common status differential of interviewee as being in the more powerful situation, is somewhat reversed. It becomes, therefore, from my perspective the interviewing of 'academic elites' with all the attendant issues associated with this. One major difficulty is that of access to elites. These people are very busy and therefore very short of time; they can be difficult to contact; and they also can have more authoritative grounds to refuse co-operation. Another difficulty is the necessity for the interviewer having a significant degree of knowledge in the interview situation (Hertz and Imber, 1995). The issue of access to institutions, departments and finally individual academics was a complex process of negotiation at a number of different levels. Initial interviews were conducted with the Pro Vice Chancellors (for research), and permission to carry out the study within the university was sought. Each Pro Vice Chancellor showed great interest in the project and they were happy to meet with me and discuss the project and even lend their support to introduce me to the head of each of the departments that I hoped to study. They provided me with some official documentation and were prepared to talk about their university and their ideas concerning the RAE.

I then contacted heads of department in order to negotiate access to departments. This proved to be a more difficult process of negotiation. At Royal County University all three heads of department agreed to my carrying out the study. At Golden County University, however, only one head of department agreed outright (unfortunately he was soon to leave the department which meant further negotiation with the new head, who was rather less welcoming). He wanted to know why he should allow me to take up so much of the very valuable time of staff within the department - which could be up to 50 hours in total). Another head of department said 'no' outright, which meant that I had to change the discipline of study (and hence conduct further negotiations at Royal County University). The final head of Department agreed only after a series of consultations with colleagues and on condition that individual colleagues were free to decline (a condition I had already granted).

Negotiation of access to individual academics was very time consuming. Letters and follow up phone calls were on the whole answered positively but that was only when the individuals could be contacted. Disciplinary differences were evident here with scientists either being available to answer calls or having secretaries to take messages and social scientists and humanities staff being very difficult to track down. However, except for those people who were away on research leave or 'too busy' only two people refused to be interviewed. Indeed, the high level of positive response somewhat surprised me. In one department the head wanted to arrange the interviews for me (presumably as a means of gate keeping) but finally gave up when he could not get anyone to agree. However,

when I contacted the members of this department very few people declined to be interviewed.

It may be because of the seriousness with which the RAE is taken as well as the intense curiosity which academics have about the RAE process (which still has some mystery surrounding it) that office doors were opened to me. The perceived seriousness of the RAE (its relationship to funding and status of universities and university departments), i.e. the subject of my research, may have helped to ensure that I was taken seriously as a researcher rather than as a very junior research student. This was evidenced by the interest that was shown in my study by some of the academics in my sample and the level of informal 'discussions' with individuals outside of interview time.

'Informal' discussions were carried out with individuals before and after interviews. And I also joined them for coffee or stopped to have friendly chats when meeting them in the corridors. However, the personal intimacy which is argued by Bourdieu to better facilitate 'understanding' and which was achieved by Oakley (1990) was not possible in the present study. Multiple interviews were carried out with certain individuals such as heads of department but for the most part interviews were a singular event. Time constraints on academics limited the number of interviews that could be done. It could be argued that Bourdieu's concern with the possibility of 'symbolic violence' imposed by a Sociologist of higher social status, is less likely in this kind of interview situation with the interviewee being of higher social status than the interviewer. However, the pitfalls of classifying individuals too readily or asking questions that display a lack of



understanding of the specific social situation of the interviewee are all too readily applicable in any interview situation. Aside from the status of the interviewer, these can be reflected in the tone of the interviewer and particularly the content of questions (Bourdieu, 1996b).

Researcher knowledge was an important issue in this study for a number of reasons. Knowledge of RAE process, knowledge of the university system and finally knowledge of individual disciplines were all relevant. Knowledge of the RAE was paramount in order for me to be taken seriously. Lack of knowledge of the university system could paradoxically be an advantage - asking naïve questions (or expressing cultural ignorance as discussed in the previous section). Lack of knowledge of the discipline (journals, research areas, technical language) was a problem, less so in Sociology interviews, although once again the asking of naïve questions often yielded interesting results. I presented myself interchangeably as a kind of 'insider' of academia and an 'outsider' in terms of knowledge of individual institutions/departments. The insider/knowledgeable versus outsider/naïve has to be managed to best effect (Ball, 1994). With regard to Sociology departments and disciplinary concerns there was a danger of over familiarity. I tried to compensate for this by restating terms used by the respondent and requesting further clarification of these terms (Spradley, 1979). I tried to do this even where I was familiar with the topic under discussion. Other sociologists, however, can be recognised as colleagues and there is a danger when interviewing individuals who may be familiar to you or at least who share the same discipline to show too much understanding and to appear to understand what they are talking about too quickly (Platt, 1981).

For the interviews, the availability of such experience and of a shared 'public language' tempts to carelessness. Not to accept the point quickly, without requiring detailed explanations can seem pedestrian and unintelligent, but may nonetheless be necessary to get clear and explicit data. (Platt, 1981: 82)

The temptation to succumb to the pressure to grasp quickly the meaning of what is being said and leave unquestioned common sense knowledge must be resisted. Fowler (1996) argues that the sociologist, like Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin ( in The Idiot), must question everything even if this results in an appearance of naiveté.

This takes us on to the third issue of academics as 'objects' of study. Academics have a high degree of specific knowledge at their command as already discussed. But more than this they have analytical, interpretative and linguistic skills which they bring to the interview situation. Thus, they present 'narratives' which work to construct and direct 'meaning' in the interview situation. When talking of the specific narratives given to him by political interviewees, Ball argues, "The story has a strong analytical thread. He is telling us not only what has happened but how to understand it" (Ball, 1994: 102).

Sociologists are especially skilled at analysing and interpreting social situations, and this means that some of the interview data can be loaded with sociological and analytical concepts. It has been argued (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996) that where interviewee data provides heavily theorised accounts of events then the data is unusable. However, that is precisely what academics do, and so this must simply become part of the analysis process.

Bourdieu (1996) describes this process as a 'resistance to objectification' by the interviewee who by the use of specific social and linguistic skills seems to be colluding with the interviewer in providing an "appearance of an explanation" for particular actions and points of view and the interviewer can be taken in by the "authenticity of the respondent's testimony". Interviewees, therefore will give their own 'readings' of social situations (Fowler, 1996). The accounts given by interviewees therefore cannot be too readily accepted. Bourdieu (1996) argues, furthermore, that a reliance only on subjective accounts provides only one part of the social truth of the world. What is also necessary is to reveal the structuring pressures behind the action of agents and the discourse they use to talk about their actions and experience.

The social situation within which interviews occur must also be subject to analysis as well as the role of the researcher and their particular social position and trajectory. This involves the practice of reflexivity to which I will now turn.

### **Reflexivity in the Research Process**

The principle of reflexivity primarily involves the idea that the sociologist and the social conditions that make sociological investigation and the production of knowledge possible are as central to any research enquiry as is the 'object' of study. When the researcher is in close social proximity to the interviewee or person under investigation then this can mean that s/he is also to some extent involved in this objectification process, something that

Bourdieu calls 'participant objectivation' (Bourdieu, 1996b). To turn the interviewee into an object of study requires that the interviewer should recognise that s/he, being positioned in that same social space, is also under investigation. The position in social space occupied by the interviewer, therefore, both in the objectively inscribed social conditions of their habitus, social background, education, possession of cultural capital etc... and in their position in the academic or sociological field is pertinent. All of the attributes that would determine their social and intellectual points of interest and investment must be subject to analysis. Bourdieu, however, does not propose a reflexive turn on behalf of the researcher to be merely an exercise in producing their own account of what has driven their personal interests and motivations. Reflexivity involves a process of socio-analysis of the social conditions that have played a role in determining the researcher/agent both as inscribed in their social background (habitus) and in their sociological habitus. As Wacquant (1992) maintains:

For Bourdieu, then, reflexivity does not involve reflection of the subject on the subject in the manner of the Hegelian Selbstbewusstsein or of the "egological perspective" (Sharrock and Anderson 1986: 35) defended by ethnomethodology, phenomenological sociology, and Gouldner. It entails, rather, the systematic exploration of the "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu 1982a: 10), as well as guide the practical carrying out of social inquiry. The "return" it calls for extends beyond the experiencing subject to encompass the organisational and cognitive structure of the discipline. What has to be constantly scrutinised and neutralised, in the very act of construction of the object, is the collective scientific unconscious embedded in theories, problems and...categories of scholarly judgement. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 40)

As an illustration of this, Wacquant (1992) echoes Bourdieu's self socio-analysis that was given in quotation at the beginning of Chapter Three. He argues that an understanding of

the man and his work is not to be found in “private revelations” but “is linked to a social trajectory...Bourdieu’s concern for reflexivity finds its roots in his social and academic trajectory and expresses the conditions of constitution of his early scientific habitus.”

(p.44). He cites three critical events which he believes to have been critical to the formation of Bourdieu’s scientific habitus: his feelings of being a stranger and misfit in the world of intellectuals, coming as he did from humble origins; the Algerian war of liberation; and his reconversion from the study of Philosophy to the study of Sociology. He also looks to Bourdieu’s involvement in the French intellectual field and the various positions within that structure which may account for Bourdieu’s ‘taste’ for reflexivity. In support of this he stresses, “the existence of grand living models of the intellectual vocation - most prominently those incarnated by Levi Strauss and Sartre - and the sense of intellectual ambition and self confidence imparted through the Ecole normale superieure...the extraordinary concentration of scientific capital in Paris...and Bourdieu’s unique insertion in an institution unique for its multi-disciplinary orientation...” (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 46).

Bourdieu’s insistence on a reflexive social science can be seen as a “philosophical refuge from the scourge of relativism” (Fowler, 1996). Given that reality and truth are contested, in order to avoid a simple reduction of these to the particular point of view of any one person, Bourdieu argues that a reflexive social science reintroduces the notion of the collective, the universal. Reality is socially constructed, it is formed by the collective, within a social universe. For, as Waquant (1992) argues, there is a particularly Western

conception of individuality that steadfastly resists what is wrongly perceived as sociological reductionism.

Sociological reflexivity instantly raises the hackles because it represents a frontal attack on the sacred sense of individuality that is so dear to all of us Westerners, and particularly on the charismatic self-conception of intellectuals who like to think of themselves as undetermined, “free-floating”, and endowed with a form of symbolic grace. For Bourdieu, reflexivity is precisely what enables us to escape such delusions by uncovering the social at the heart of the individual, the impersonal beneath the intimate, the universal buried deep within the most particular. (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 44)

The aim of reflexivity is not simply one of sociological interest, however. As indicated earlier, this process is seen as a necessary way of attaining a truly scientific account of the social world. If the sociologist has a ‘point of view’ on a ‘point of view’ (of the researched) then the sociologist’s world view must be investigated in tandem with that of the ‘object’ of social investigation.

...Bourdieu’s concern for reflexivity, like his social theory is neither egocentric nor logocentric but quintessentially embedded in, and turned toward scientific practice. It fastens not upon the private person of the sociologist in her idiosyncratic intimacy but on concatenations of acts and operations she effects as part of her work and on the collective unconscious inscribed in them. Far from encouraging narcissism and solipsism, epistemic reflexivity invites intellectuals to recognise and to work to neutralise the specific determinisms to which their innermost thoughts are subjected and it informs a conception of the craft of research designed to strengthen its epistemological moorings. (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992: 46)

The significance of Bourdieu’s idea of a reflexive social science is relevant to the present study. This project is an investigation of the academic field and a number of disciplinary fields. The first condition of reflexivity, therefore, calls for an analysis of the academic field and the research practices within it and this is a central concern of this thesis. This is

what the next three chapters will address, with Chapter Five investigating the Biology *field*, Chapter Six investigating the Sociology *field* and Chapter Seven the *field* of English. An attempt to fulfil the second condition of reflexivity, the social position held by the researcher, is contained in Appendix 5.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### **Biological Uncertainties: an Investigation of Two Biological Science Departments**

First, there is no “environment” in some independent and abstract sense. Just as there is no organism without an environment, there is no environment without an organism. Organisms do not experience environments. They create them. There is an infinity of ways in which parts of the world can be assembled to make an environment, and we can know what the environment of an organism is only by consulting the organism. Not only do we consult the organism, but when we describe the environment we describe it in terms of the organism’s behaviour and life activities. (Lewontin, 1991: 110)

The individuals who work there create the environment of the university department. The concern of this research study is an empirical investigation into the research practices and processes of academics working within universities. This chapter deals with academics working in two Biology departments. The intention is both to locate these practices within the structures governing academic life and to show how academics by their actions serve to reproduce and resist these structures.

The practices of social agents are determined by structural conditions only in so far as they determine themselves. Social agents are an active force in the reproduction and resistance of the social structures governing their activities. As Bourdieu (1984b) argues, any social field is a site that is constructed by the struggles and strategies adopted by agents.



The 'pure' universe of even the 'purest' science is a social field like any other, with its distribution of power and its monopolies, its struggles and strategies, interests and profits but it is a field in which all these invariants take on specific forms. (Bourdieu, 1984b: 257)

This study analyses, therefore, the invariants of the academic field. It is not concerned with the university field or disciplinary field in its totality but instead concentrates on a more detailed study of individual case studies of university departments. The focus, therefore, is on the local 'struggles and strategies' to be found in university departments. The academic department was nominated as the 'case' since it is the most appropriate level due to its pivotal status as the site of intersection between the disciplinary field and university field within which the 'biological habitus' of academics is constructed. Academics within university departments are constructed by and construct these social fields. It is this dynamic of multiple sites of struggle for inclusion and recognition which forms the basis of this study.

In the first instance, following Grenfell and James (1998), I will investigate the organisational, managerial and ideational structures that govern practices within university departments. The organisational and managerial structures will be studied in relation to the research policies and research activities within the two Biology departments at GCU and RCU. I will then go on to analyse the ideational structures to reveal the 'principles of differentiation' (Bourdieu, 1988) which provide a structural determination of what is valued and rewarded within the department. An analysis of this kind gives another perspective on understandings of 'power' within university organisation that goes beyond the concepts of authority and decision-making.

Certain issues emerged from research evidence presented on the impacts of the research assessment exercise (see Chapter One). The first of these was an increase in managerialism (Harley and Lee, 1997) within institutional processes. However, as Bourdieu (1994) argues, the process of decision-making is everywhere that symbolic value is constructed. It is necessary, therefore, to explore in more depth the implicit value structures, which drive academic discourse and the means by which ideational structures, existing outside university departments in the wider academic and disciplinary fields, govern the decision-making processes within them.

Bourdieu (1988) postulates the notion of ‘rival principles of hierarchization’ within the academic and scientific field that must be identified in order to understand the value structures governing academic practices (see Chapter Three). Examples he gives from his study of the French academic system in the 1960s are ‘academic’ versus ‘intellectual’ or ‘scientific’ versus ‘administrative’ hierarchical structures. These principles of hierarchization are not fixed but are constituted by an on-going struggle to produce symbolic value within the academic field. I will outline some of the principles of hierarchization, which are evident from the study of these Biology departments, particularly in relation to research activities and the criteria of judgements used in the RAE.

The first key principle of differentiation identified by Bourdieu (1988) which is important for this study is that of research and teaching with teaching (or the reproduction of the academic field) being seen as subsidiary to the more creative, productive activities of the

researchers. The extent to which academic life is being dominated by this one hierarchical principle is an important question. From the research evidence presented in Chapter One, there is substantial support for the idea that research is more highly valued than teaching (Jenkins, 1995; McNay, 1997). To what extent, therefore, can research activity be considered a central defining feature of academic work?

The second key principles of differentiation can be found in the wider disciplinary structures of the field of Biology and refer to the processes of research and knowledge production within this discipline. The taxonomies created by Becher (1989) serve as a starting point to begin thinking about some of the hierarchical principles within the field of Biology. Becher (1989) gives four primary forms of differentiation within disciplinary structures. These can be summarised as pure/applied and hard/soft forms of knowledge (see Chapter Two). He also provides a differentiation of knowledge production into urban/rural and convergent/divergent organisation of research processes.

The third important means of identifying principles of differentiation within the research field of Biology is to be found in the criteria outlined in the RAE process itself. There are multiple principles of differentiation used in the RAE process including that between national and international recognition of one's work, the distinction between original research and scholarship, as well as judgement made on the different types of research funding awarded and different forms of research output such as publications. The criteria set out by the Biology panel for the 1996 RAE can be found in Appendix 6.

All of these principles of differentiation are not fixed but constitute a site of struggle over classification. Firstly, in terms of the struggle to define the terms of classification and secondly, to determine the boundaries of those classifications and the terms of inclusion and exclusion of agents positioned in the field. The aim of this Chapter, therefore, is to show what the key principles of differentiation are within these Biology departments and the means by which these constitute and are constituted by the practices of academics working within them.

Finally, I will bring together the structural positioning of Biologists within their institutional and disciplinary location and account for their particular strategies and struggles in relation to research activities. I will seek to determine whether, as Bassett (1996) suggested, there are new forms of competition and mechanisms for accumulating cultural capital within the changing field of play in the English academic system and how this may have been internalised within the academic habitus.

### **Organisational, Managerial and Ideational Structures with the Biology departments at Golden County University and Royal County University**

There are seventy-three departments of Biological Sciences across all UK universities and colleges. Within each can be found a diversity of organisational and cultural processes. In this study, I am looking at two Biology departments and I will analyse the key structural features of the departments, organisationally, managerially and ideationally

(Grenfell and James, 1998). These structural features will be explored by looking in detail at accounts of policies and decision-making processes that occurred in the department in preparation for the 1996 RAE and the perceptions of these processes after the RAE had occurred.

Before discussing the research policies and research activities of these two departments, I will provide some background information on staff numbers and terms and conditions of employment. This will help to sketch a means of comparison of organisation and scale between the two departments. For reasons of confidentiality (see Chapter Four) only a minimum amount of descriptive information will be provided.

The Biology department at GCU was opened at the inception of the university during the early 1960s. This is a relatively large department in comparison with other UK Biology departments. Most Biology departments in the UK have fewer than 40 members of staff (70%), 25% have between 40 and 60 members of staff and 5% have more than sixty members of staff.<sup>1</sup> The Biology department at GCU is within the category of 40 and 60 members of staff. This figure does not include the large number of research staff also employed in the department. The official figure, given in HESA data, of staff numbers in Biology at GCU is in excess of 150. The proportion of staff employed as lecturers and researchers is given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Percentages of Staff Employed on Different Status levels in Biology departments 1996/97

	Biology GCU (%)	Biology RCU (%)	All Biology Departments (%)
Lecturers	9	65	20
Senior Lecturers Researchers	9	18	13
Professors	9	0	6
Researchers	73	2	54
Others	0	14	5
Total	100	100	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

The Biology School at RCU was created in 1987. The School has approximately forty members of teaching staff. This places it within the most common category of department size, with 70% of Biology departments in the UK having forty members of staff or less.

The proportion of staff employed as lecturers and researchers is given in Table 5.1. These figures differ from the data collected by me during this period. For example, HESA list there being no Professors at RCU, whereas my data collected from the department during that same year show three Professors. This anomaly can be accounted for by the inability of official data to reflect current fluctuations and furthermore, the precise categorisation of staff and exact numbers employed can vary. The exact figures of staff employed is less important, however, than the overall comparisons between the two departments. The HESA data will therefore be useful as a base measure. For reasons of confidentiality I will also give the figures in percentages so that departments cannot be identified from the exact numbers of staff.

The data in Table 5.1 shows quite clearly that the greatest number of staff at GCU are those employed as researchers whereas at RCU it is Lecturers and Senior Lecturers or Senior Researchers. This difference reflects the much larger number of research staff, including Postdoctoral Researchers and Research Assistants employed at GCU (in excess of one hundred) compared to RCU which employs very few 'research only' staff. The greater number of research staff at GCU also reflects on the terms and conditions of service within the department. Table 5.2 shows that at GCU 75% of staff are employed as 'research only' whereas at RCU this figure is only 2%. At RCU most staff are employed on 'teaching and research' contracts (94%).

Table 5.2: Percentage of Staff employed and 'type of contract' in Biology departments 1996/7

	Biology GCU (%)	Biology RCU (%)	All Biology Departments (%)
Teaching Only	0	4	3
Research Only	75	2	57
Teaching and Research	25	94	40
Total	100	100	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

This pattern is further revealed by the data in Table 5.3, which shows that 75% of staff at GCU are on fixed term contracts compared to 20% at RCU. Likewise, greater proportions of staff at RCU are on permanent contracts (76%) compared to GCU (25%).

Table 5.3: Percentage of Staff employed and conditions of service in Biology departments 1996/7

	Biology GCU (%)	Biology RCU (%)	All Biology Departments (%)
Permanent	25	76	37
Fixed Term Contract	75	20	62
Casual/Hourly Paid	0	4	0.5
Other	0	0	0.5
Total	100	100	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

The much larger number of staff employed as ‘research only’ staff at GCU ensures that within this department there is a wide variety of staff on different conditions of service. At RCU this diversity is less marked. This difference reflects the historical teaching and research mission at each institution, with teaching playing a greater central role at RCU than GCU and research being of more significance within staff activities at GCU.

These two departments have very diverse characteristics in terms of the composition of staff. These differences are further accentuated when one looks at the number of positions funded by research councils. At RCU, all posts were funded by the university except one post that was funded by a Research Council (BBSRC). At GCU, on the other hand, the Research Councils funded 42 (26%) of posts (Source: RAE Submission, 1996). The total level of funding for research in these departments is also very different. Figures show that GCU receives in excess of five times the level of research funding given to RCU both from the Research Councils and other sources of research funding such as charities



(Source: RAE Submission, 1996). At GCU there are also 30 staff posts that are funded by charities.

These two departments are diverse in a number of ways in terms of staff composition and funding of research. The data available on these departments provides a skeletal outline of the staff composition and organisation within these departments. Given the wide variations, however, what are the likely differences between the two departments in terms of how they organise and think about the role of research? In the next section I will investigate in more depth the specific organisational, managerial and ideational structures that govern these departments. These will be discussed primarily in relation to research policies and research activities.

### **Research Assessment, Research Policy and Research Activities in Biology at GCU**

We play the game. We try and maximise the benefit to the department by the rules set on us. At least I do. And there are people in the department who say that it is absolutely silly. And I am afraid I think, as head of department the job is to maximise the resource in the department and to try and get it running well. You know, so you make decisions based upon these things. You learn the rules and you work to them, I am afraid. I am a shamed player of that game. If the government is going to play games with us and say this is the right work, I respond, and eh whether I approve or not is irrelevant.

(Professor Meggitt, ex-Head of Department, Biology, GCU)

Professor Meggitt is no longer head of the Biology department at GCU but he was the head of department from 1990-1997 and was therefore in post prior to the 1996 RAE. He describes the department as having been 'run under me' indicating a highly

individualised role in comparison to the possibility of an 'executive committee' style of leadership which he says might be instigated by the incoming head.

There is no faculty or school structure at GCU so departments are answerable directly to central administration. The central decision-making body within each department is the Subject Committee<sup>2</sup>. All members of academic staff sit on this board and there are also student representatives. There are a number of sub-committees that branch off from the Subject Committee, including a variety of undergraduate teaching committees for different subject areas. There is also a separate Graduate Board that deals with all issues relevant to postgraduate education within the department. The organisational belief around the Subject Committee is what could be described as a 'collegial' form of decision-making. The essence of what is described as 'pure' collegiality is "participation (by all) in decision-making" (Bush, 1998:69). The participation of all members of academic staff in the Subject Committee would therefore constitute an approximation of the collegial ideal.

However, the central role played by the head of department also indicates a more 'managerial' form of decision-making within the department. The previous Chairman of the Subject Committee from 1992 to 1996, Dr Merrygold, describes a parallel existence of two forms of power structure within the department, the 1960s 'democratic organisation' of the Subject Committee and the 1990s 'line management' style of leadership by the head of Department. Rather than attempt to approximate the extent to which the department fits within a 'collegial' or 'managerial' model of decision-making,

therefore, it is possible to look at the ways in which both can be seen to operate in different ways and at different levels within the department.

Taking the example of the formation of research policy within the department and specifically the submission and planning of the RAE gives an insight into one aspect of the authority structures and decision-making processes within the department. Professor Meggitt took a leading role particularly in the RAE submission and policy formation and was described by one member of staff as being 'obsessed' with getting a high rating for the department in the RAE. Professor Meggitt himself maintains that he had made a "personal declaration" to increase the research rating of the department after becoming head.

He relates the events of the RAE submission and the decisions surrounding it almost as a personal crusade with him steering a steady course of decision making, faced with disagreements both from the university research committee and the Biology department research committee. He took the final decision on the RAE submission believing that "it was my responsibility to present it and I was going to take the flack and so I did it the way I thought I should". He had calculated that the income for the department would be six times greater if the department increased their rating in the 1996 RAE. For this reason, Professor Meggitt felt justified in taking what he believed to be the best decisions for the department in order to maximise this income. This could only be done at the cost of submitting a smaller number of staff, thereby achieving a lower rating on the number of staff submitted. He believed that this was of lesser significance than the overall rating

which was considered to be the most important goal. Professor Meggitt explains the disagreements over this decision in the following way:

**Professor Meggitt:** And so we ended up missing a total of 7 people off the submission out of 50 so we submitted 43 instead of 50 because in our judgement that gave us the best overall return...we viewed it as a game where a) it was essential to become a higher rating and b) it was essential within that to maximise income. And we viewed it as exactly that and the strategy was to achieve those aims and we viewed that as more important than the university or the Vice-Chancellor's desire to have it as a full department representation. Keep asking...

**Interviewer:** So you just went ahead in terms of the...?

**Professor Meggitt:** Well we said we were going to. I sent a letter to the university research committee saying that we were intending to do that and they said you shouldn't and we said we should. And another department ended up following our example. And I think the result shows that we were quite right because we will be known as a (highly) rated department... (and income was increased). So for all reasons it was the right strategy. But that was one that was made basically by me as head of department, I would have done that, eh I didn't have total support in the department. A lot of people felt that it was really bad news for the seven missed off and we had to deal with that but it seemed to me that that was the right strategy.

(Professor, Meggitt, HOD, Biology, GCU)

As Professor Meggitt acknowledged, however, not all staff were in agreement with the decisions that had been taken. Those members of staff who had not been put forward in the RAE were unhappy with the outcome and there were others who supported their objections. Dr Dray expressed his dismay at the decisions taken and of one particular colleague being excluded from the submission.

**Dr Dray:** There was some general consultation with the department in so far as the head of the department produced a paper about the RAE with the Chair of the

research committee and they tried to explain some of the decisions that they were taking and why they were taken and in particular why some members of staff were not going to be in the RAE. They weren't named of course but I think it finished that six members of staff were not on the RAE. I was not involved in the decisions. When I heard who one of the members of staff was I was frankly outraged because this person is a good member of staff who was producing good publications and so on and who got good grant income and he was left off. And it turned out that he was left off because it just so happened in that particular four year period of the exercise he had not spoken at an international conference and the strategic decision had been taken that the only people to go on the RAE would be those who had spoken at an international conference. The decision was basically we will show that everybody at GCU can be represented as being international and whether the committee bought that or not is another matter. Em but certainly nobody was going to go into the RAE unless they could be represented as being of international standard, good national wasn't considered enough. So I wrote to the head of department to say that I thought this was quite outrageous and actually went to see the head of department and did my best to get that decision reversed but was unsuccessful.

(Dr Dray, Biologist, GCU)

All the evidence from the accounts of members of staff interviewed in the department indicates that the head of department took a 'strong' managerial role in the preparation and submission of the RAE. In terms of the general research policies and direction of research funds within the department, the research committee carries this out. Unlike the subject committee which admits all members of staff, the research committee is made up of only seven members of staff, the "research stars" of the department as they were referred to by one member of staff. The seven members of staff are mainly senior members of staff and are all successful researchers. Members include the head of department, five Professors and one lecturer. This form of decision-making involves only a minority of staff is referred to as 'restricted collegiality' (Bush, 1998).

The research committee is responsible for the management and direction of research funds within the department, the formation of research policy, particularly the review of research activity within the department and the monitoring of research activity of individual members of staff. Decisions are taken research funds for equipment grant money, 'pump priming money' to encourage new research and travel expenses to conferences. The research committee is also responsible for monitoring the research activity within the department. Professor Meggitt explains this process as follows:

I mean first of all there is making sure that the staff know what is expected of them. And for that the research committee sees each member of staff each year and basically eh basically gets that member of staff to have drawn up a plan for their research for the year with their goals on it and to discuss that with them. Some years I have seen a member of staff as well and I would certainly expect to see members of staff who were having trouble in producing the quality of output that they should be and talking naturally with them. So there is quite a lot of making sure people know what the expectancy is and where that should be going.

But the intention is, I don't know what other people in the department will tell you, but the intention is to do it with as light a touch as possible and to intrude in that when it seems necessary. There is quite a strong direction given I think in what people are expected to achieve but eh there is a great deal of freedom in how they achieve it.

(Professor Meggitt, ex-HOD, Biology, GCU)

This form of monitoring is testament to the increase in what has been referred to as 'managerial surveillance' (Harley and Lowe, 1998) of academic work. There are many conflicting metaphors used by Professor Meggitt to describe the managerial process, with a 'light' touch being used to guide the activities of members of staff at the same time as a 'strong' direction is given as to the ends those activities should meet. The opposition between the professional ideal of autonomy and self-determination within academic life

is increasingly being questioned as new management structures and practices are introduced. It is argued by some commentators, that these management structures are “predicated on weakening professional control structures” (Parker and Jary, 1994). These practices include the monitoring and controlling of academic work. The extent to which academic staff experience or perceive their work to be controlled by themselves or outside influences depends crucially on their position within the department and their engagement in research activities.

### **Research Assessment, Research Policies and Research Activities in Biology at RCU**

Well the key advantage, for us (the RAE) has been brilliant. We couldn't possibly knock it because we went from the situation of being a Polytechnic with no core research funding whatsoever to being in a system that is giving us core research funding. Because that wasn't taken away from us like the old universities, it hasn't had to go back just to balance the books, which has happened in most of the old universities. It has actually been new money which universities top slice 25% and the rest comes straight back into the schools. And that coupled with the DevR and now the NFF funding has just *transformed us* (my emphasis) yeah.

(Dr Niven, Director of Research School, Biology, RCU)

The Biology School at RCU is described as a number of integrated departments or sections. Each section has a Leader who is primarily responsible for the organisation of teaching activities in that area. The styles of leadership are various in the different sections. There is some overlap between these sections and so no field is completely separated. However, one lecturer in the School, Dr Lewis, describes it as a “very diverse amalgam of different departments”. Given the size of the school, therefore, the social

interaction of members of staff is limited, particularly outside of their own section.

Another lecturer in the School, Dr Battersby, however, maintains that the sections are more integrated and he argues that the divisions are “artificial” since “some staff from one section actually teach on modules in another section”.

All of the sections together are the responsibility of the Head of School, Professor Laing and two Deputy Heads. One Deputy Head is concerned with academic development and the other has responsibilities for resources. There is now also a Director of the Research School, Dr Niven, who was appointed in 1996. The decision was taken after the 1996 RAE to have a Research School and to appoint a Director. Prior to this the head, Professor Laing had assumed major responsibility. Professor Laing made the comment during an interview that “in some ways it is difficult to see what exactly I do now that I have everyone else doing jobs for me”. But he adds, “I am responsible for whatever goes on in the school. Even though I have got a Research Director running the Research School, I am still ultimately responsible for research”.

The School has a research committee that meets to discuss all issues related to research. This committee is attended by all of the section leaders. Decision-making on research, therefore, takes the form of ‘restricted collegiality’ (Bush, 1998) whereby representatives for all members of staff meet to discuss important issues. There is less of an expression of the need or necessity for ‘collegiality’ within the School or in the various sections. Indeed, some members of staff express a belief that increased managerialism would help the organisation of the department. Dr Battersby maintains that he is “glad that an



academic runs this School and not a manager, however, it is also fair to say that we need more management especially in strategic issues”. Little reference is made by any of the members of staff to the existence or wish for a ‘collegial’ set of relations. This could be explained by the fact that ‘new’ universities have always had more managerial structures than ‘old’ universities.

In terms of decision-making for the RAE submission, this was put together by a small group of four senior members of staff with the Head of School, Professor Laing taking a leading role. One of the main decisions for the RAE submission was how many staff to put forward. Professor Laing argued that they wanted to put forward only the ‘best staff’ but also the maximum number possible. The conditions for inclusion that he lists are as follows; that the person must have four publications, an established reputation within their peer group and how the research presented would “look to a panel of classical Biologists”. The result was a submission of just over 50% of staff in the School. A critical policy in the 1996 RAE submission was the return of staff under different units of assessment (UOA). A number of staff were returned under a different UOA from Biological Sciences. In terms of classifications, therefore, decision making centred both on those members of staff deemed ‘research active’ and also under which UOA they would be submitted. Of the members of staff interviewed at RCU there seemed to be most disagreement from those submitted under a different UOA from Biological Sciences.

**Interviewer:** So from your point of view you just submitted...?

**Dr Freeman:** (I) also supplied information on scholarly activity...that was it basically... It was kept very shrouded, for instance, I actually was submitted as (UOA) rather than (Biological Sciences) submission in this department and I am very clearly in (Biological Sciences)...I assume they saw me as more fitted with the (UOA) which I don't agree with and also our (UOA) was very weak and because I had a lot from a research and publications point of view... I think they used me to bolster the submission. I realise it is a game that they are playing but on a personal basis I don't wish to be considered (that kind of scientist).

**Interviewer:** Did you lose out financially?

**Dr Freeman:** Well you know what the ratings were here obviously you will know that (UOA) went (up one grade) and Biology went (up one grade) and as a consequence of that there has been a lot of money relatively speaking in terms... and a smaller amount given to the (UOA)... If there is 15,000 pounds in total between x people then that is no good to me...(...) So you have no control... decision-making is not discussed really...

The small group concerned, therefore, took decisions on RAE submission. Other staff attested to the fact that it was not discussed at the School committee meetings. The research committee would deal with more general research issues. The research committee would have responsibility for deciding on research strategy for the School and critically how research funding (particularly core funding gained as a result of the RAE) should be utilised. The institutional policy at RCU was as far as possible for research funds from the RAE should be redistributed to Schools (based proportionately on their grading - after a 'top slice' had been taken by the institution). Schools were then able to decide their strategy for using this money. This contrasts with GCU whereby 'core funding' to department is decided by the University research committee and central administration. The level of funding given to RCU was much lower than that awarded to GCU. At RCU, therefore, decision making primarily centred on the funding of postdoctoral positions and funds for travel to conferences. The decision over funds hinges

on the extent of selectivity over who should be supported. A discussion at one research committee meeting proceeds as follows:

**Dr Niven:** Maintains that the priority of the school is to ensure that the research base is solid first of all...

**Dr Lockwood:** Says that people should outline what their own requirements are. Everyone agrees.

**Participant:** Says that everyone may not want the most expensive options.

**Dr Niven:** Emphasizes that the discussion must include everyone not in the group.

**Dr Summers:** Argues quite emphatically that the department wants to achieve a (higher rating) next time and therefore must increase the international reputation. Also must 'maintain the core' or 'backbone' of the department in order to achieve this. Must look at what these people need, not as a reward but in order to maintain this core.

These 'core' people are named.

(Research Committee meeting, Biology, RCU, April 1997)

The organisational structures in Biology at RCU can be characterised as 'restricted collegiality' (Bush, 1998). The transcript from the research committee meeting shown above demonstrates how participation in decision-making on issues such as research funding are not restricted to a managerial 'few'. The RAE submission, however, shows that where necessary 'hard' decisions will be taken in terms of inclusion and exclusion of individuals. Organisational and managerial processes within university departments, therefore, must be analysed in their specificity highlighting the complexity of these processes rather than the broad sweeping claims made in the literature on higher education on the rise of managerialism.

The analyses of decision-making and authority structures within university departments are important in order to understand particular relations of power within university settings. Power can be analysed in another way, however, that of the struggle to control and influence *symbolic value* (or *symbolic capital*). Decisions are taken within particular ideational structures governed by principles of differentiation (Bourdieu, 1988) that determine the forms of *symbolic capital* operative within the academic field (see Chapter Three). In the following section, I will investigate the principles of differentiation that exist within these Biology departments and show how these structures inform the practices of academics at all levels from institutional and departmental leaders formulating funding strategies to lecturers and researchers deciding where to publish their research findings.

### **Principles of Differentiation of Academic Work in the Biology departments**

Within the Biology department at GCU, there are no members of staff who are employed on a 'teaching only' basis. However, there are a large number of staff who are employed on a 'research only' basis, including contract researchers, Research Fellows and Research Professors. Professor Mulligan is an example of a Research Professor employed only to do research. There are three members of staff employed on this basis. There are also twelve members of staff employed as Research Fellows, funded either by research councils or the university. Some of the research staff also teach within the department but they are employed primarily to do research. Staff within the Biology department at GCU are divided along 'research only' staff and those employed to do teaching and research.

The policy of GCU is to have all staff involved in research and this means that they should be research active in a way that meets the criteria set by the RAE. Similarly, all staff except those deemed 'research only' are involved in teaching and administration. The consensus around the department and an approximation given by the head of department is that those staff employed to do teaching and research should spend 40% of their time on teaching, 40% on research and 20% on administration. Other members of staff are expected to do 100% research.

I will explore, therefore, the economy of time spent by those staff in the department who are employed to teach and particularly those members of staff occupying key positions within the department in the organisation of teaching activities. I will outline the forms of specific academic capital which members of staff possess. Finally, I will discuss the idea that teaching and administration are awarded less symbolic value than that awarded to research activities.

Halsey (1992) in his survey of academic staff across the higher education sector found that in 1989 in the university sector the average amount of time spent on teaching, research and administration was 38%, 28% and 24% respectively with 10% of time spent on 'other' activities. For the 'new' university sector these figures were 50%, 19%, 28% and 3%. Other studies on the hours of time spent by academics have shown similar findings to these, however, there is also shown to be a large variation in time spent on

activities depending on the status of academics and also at different stages during the academic year (Court, 1996).

The evidence from these surveys does not concur with the departmental norm used within the Biology department at GCU which states that staff should spend 40% of time on teaching, 40% on research and 20% on administration. The average of 40% of time spent on teaching fits with the averages given in the AUT survey but far more time is spent on administration than 20% and less time than the 40% stated for research. The position which staff hold in the department is critical in determining how they apportion their time. As shown above, Professors may spend less time on teaching but the extra time may be taken up by administration (increasing to 40%) rather than on research.

Some of the members of staff interviewed expressed a concern that a lot of their time was taken up by teaching and administrative duties. This was especially apparent for members of staff who have a central administrative role within the department. For example, Dr Merrygold held the position of Chair of the Subject Committee, which is very time consuming and as he claims would take up substantially more than the stated 20% administration time. Other members of staff like Dr Sinclair, who is the admissions tutor within the department, illustrate how the time spent on administrative tasks is not only extensive but also difficult to control.

The overwhelming perception of all three of these members of staff is that the teaching and administration work that they carry out is undervalued when compared to the value

and prestige attached to research work. Bourdieu (1988) argues that the roles associated with the reproduction of the academic system, teaching and administration associated with teaching, produces important forms of academic capital such as the examples given here of Chairman of the Subject Committee and positions of importance in executive committee meetings for teaching across the university. However, these forms of academic power are seen as secondary to that of research. As Dr Sinclair argues:

...within a department it actually causes a lot of alienation of people who spend a lot of time, to take a case in point, as admissions tutor or (other) administrative work and have a heavy teaching load. They feel they are being squeezed out of the system when they are actually contributing to the department probably more than a number of people who are doing their own thing. And that did actually cause a lot of ill feeling and I am not just speaking for myself (but) other people.

(Dr Sinclair, Biologist, GCU)

Those members of staff, therefore, who believe that they have extra teaching and administrative responsibilities have correspondingly less time to spend on research activities.

Members of staff such as Dr Martin, Dr Sinclair, Dr Eccles and Dr Merrygold are active researchers although they spend much less time on research than they do on teaching and administration. For the purposes of the RAE, however, they were not put forward in the submission and thus were labelled as being 'research inactive'. To this end they are not classified as researchers within the department. The extent to which the teaching and administrative duties carried out by these staff is undervalued goes alongside the lack of

value placed on their research activities, which are not judged adequate for RAE purposes. This classification of members of staff as research inactive is deeply felt.

People who are about to be declared research inactive find this, well most of them, some of them cope with it very well, but some of them find it exceedingly stressful because they regarded it as a recognition or been assigned as being inadequate in some way. And academics are used to having their esteem partly built on their achievements doing research and to be suddenly told that you are not valued is extremely damaging to them.

(Dr Martin, Biologist, GCU)

The evidence presented from these Biologists at GCU is that time spent on research and teaching activities ensures that less time can be devoted to research. Furthermore, the undertaking of teaching and administrative roles within the department is perceived to be of lesser value than participation in research activities. However, academic roles outside of the department in the wider university structure can ensure a form of recognition and power (in the form of symbolic value). Professor McEwen, for example, who has been in the department since 1964 has previously held the position of head of department for six years. He has also served as a Pro Vice Chancellor, is chair of a number of university wide committees and is involved in Academic and Professorial Boards. Professor McEwen is also involved in research and was included in the submission for the RAE. He is also a member of the departmental research committee. He expresses a lot of enthusiasm for both the administrative activities that he is involved in as well as research and teaching although he acknowledges that the pressures on academics administrative work is more intense than was previously the case.



Well it is tricky you see. I mean I don't know what it was like being a Professor in the 1960s. I think the trouble about me as a person to talk to is that in some sense I am de-mob happy. I have only got eighteen months to go as someone who has to deal with the nitty gritty administration. So I don't view all these changes, all the mundane bureaucracy...with the horror that quite rightly my junior colleagues do. There is no doubt that there is much more work but I still manage to get an awful lot of fun out of it. I really love being here in the university. But yes the outside pressures are much stronger...

(Professor McEwen, Biologist, GCU)

The issues at stake, therefore, are firstly, the struggle for classification as a research active member of staff, which these academics are attempting to achieve. Secondly, the time spent on the different activities of research, administration and teaching and the extent to which time spent accumulating academic capital necessitates correspondingly less time accumulating research capital. Thirdly, whether forms of academic capital constitute a form of power and a principle of positive evaluation. As Bourdieu (1988) argues:

Thus nothing could better sum up the set of oppositions established between those situated at the two poles of the university field than the structure of their time-economy (because of the fact that the kind of capital possessed influences the way in which agents allocate their time): on the one side those who invest above all in the work of accumulation and management of academic capital - including their 'personal' work, devoted to a considerable extent to the production of intellectual instruments which are instruments of specifically academic power, lectures, textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.; on the other side, those who invest above all in production and secondarily, in the work of representation which contributes to the accumulation of a symbolic capital of external renown. (Bourdieu, 1988: 98)

The evidence from staff in Biology at RCU further supports the principle of division over teaching and research. Although the composition of staff is very different, with far fewer

employed on a 'research only' basis than at GCU, some staff feel that they have a disproportionate amount of teaching duties. Given that over 90% of staff are employed to do 'teaching and research', there is a division of labour between members of staff. Some members of staff perceive themselves to be primarily teachers and are content to devote their time to the pursuit of teaching and administration.

The division of labour within the School is being reviewed to further increased and formalised. The possibility of 'banding' was being discussed with a possible five-tier system of teaching load to allow those members of staff with high research and administrative roles to be given less teaching. A full teaching load would amount to 456 hours per year. This could be decreased to 90%, 75%, 60% and 40% for staff with other significant duties. The lowest teaching band would be reserved for a Deputy Head. The 60% and 75% bands would apply to those members of staff who either had high administrative tasks such as Senior Tutor or Course Tutor for a large course, or a 'major research role', including PhD supervision. The economy of time, therefore, in this School of Biology is being more formally instituted to determine how much time is spent by academic staff on teaching, administration and research activities.

Academic capital, therefore, is perceived to be subsidiary to that of research. Teaching and research are shown to be a key issue in the differentiation of academic work.

However, further differentiation of research work can be explored particularly in relation to the criteria of judgements set up within the RAE and the resultant classifications of research active and research non-active academic staff.

## **Principles of Differentiation of Research Work in Biology departments**

I think (from) the departments point of view they are very interested in money. I think that is, although there is denial of this at the highest levels, I think money really is important. If you can bring in large grants that is what eventually gives departments a huge boost. It is regarded then by people higher up the ladder as being a successful department. As such research papers by themselves don't bring in the grants, don't bring in the money. The grant applications, the successful grant applications bring in money. And I work in a subject that is 'pure' research. There is no way that I can get money from Unilever or such like. Other people working in more 'applied' research can get money in from industry and industry tends to provide a lot more money. And I think that there is a danger there that those of us who try and work on pure research are actually going to be squeezed out because it is better to employ people who work on applied research because they bring in more money than people who work on pure research who depend, particularly medical research, who depend on medical charities.

(Dr Lester, Biologist, GCU)

Not all research work is classified and valued in the same way. How this work is differentiated is what is being investigated here. For reasons of confidentiality it is not possible to discuss in detail the particular research interests of members of staff (since this may easily identify them as individuals). I will concentrate, therefore, on three main issues. Firstly, the different forms of organisation of research activities within the department, including research groupings and principles of differentiation which are operative within the disciplinary and institutional structures. Secondly, I will discuss the criteria for research excellence which is outlined by Biology panels for use in the RAE and the means by which decisions are taken, based on these criteria, over exclusion and inclusion of staff defined as 'research active' for RAE purposes. Finally, the forms of

‘research capital’ operative within these Biology departments will be discussed and the influence of RAE criteria on ‘symbolic value’ of practices will be assessed.

Becher (1989) describes Biologists as a rather heterogeneous group with a variety of sub sets of research areas. Indeed, along his taxonomy of hard/soft and convergent/divergent as a means of categorising disciplines, Biology is found to lie in the intermediary area. Thus for example, certain specialisms fit into the category of ‘hard’ science (e.g. Molecular Biology) and ‘soft’ science (e.g. Ecology). Similarly, biologists are found to be to some extent fairly harmonious and convergent in their interests despite the variety of research areas. As Becher argues: “...there is a mutual antagonism between those who study structure and processes and those whose concern is with organisms or communities. But the subject is not prone to ‘deep and permanent divisions’; there is ‘more intellectual unity than the structural diversity of the subject suggests’” (Becher, 1989:156).

The distinction of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ refers to the way in which the discipline or research area is characterised in terms of its organisation. As Becher (1989) maintains ‘hard’ knowledge “...has clearly defined boundaries; the problems with which it is concerned tend to be very narrow and circumscribed. It focuses on quantitative issues, and tends to have a well-developed theoretical structure embracing causal propositions, generalizable findings and universal laws. It is cumulative in that new findings tend to be linear developments of the existing state of knowledge.” (Becher, 1989: 153). ‘Soft’ knowledge has the opposite characteristics of “...unclear boundaries, problems which are broad in

scope and loose in definition, a relatively unspecified theoretical structure, a concern with the qualitative and particular, and a reiterative pattern of enquiry.” (Becher, 1989:153)

The other dichotomies referred to by Becher (1989) are that of pure/applied areas of research and urban/rural forms of research organisation. ‘Pure’ research is seen to be of higher value within scientific research than applied. Bourdieu (1988) provides a diagram of the divisions between pure/applied and theoretical empirical. Within the science faculty he places Biology in the middle between the two scales but leaning towards practical, applied and empirical, impure research. Becher (1989) also argues that Biology lies in an intermediary area between hard/soft and pure/applied research with some specialisms such as Ecology on the soft/applied side and others such as Microbiology on the hard/pure one. It is perhaps best to think of these as a continuum rather than a dichotomy with most disciplines positioned somewhere between either end rather than definitively on one side or the other.

It is clear from the interviews I conducted that research areas could be differentiated along certain scales of evaluation. One example of this can be cited in the interview with the Head of Biology at RCU, Professor Laing. He uses the term ‘classical Biology’ to describe the kind of research areas which might be highly esteemed by a Biology panel. He discusses one particular research area that is placed in the ‘soft’ and ‘applied’ sections of the continuum and compares this to for example, Molecular Biology, which would be towards the ‘hard’ and ‘pure’ side and therefore accorded more value.

But this (research area) is not looked upon very highly in terms of the high academic Biological scientists who were sitting on the (RAE) panel...And in general we thought that if you were a really top rate molecular Biologist, for example, which a lot of the panel members were, they would not look particularly favourably on this (research area). So although I take that particular person who was slightly upset at not being included (in the RAE submission), I think we probably made the right decision given the nature of the panel.  
(Professor Laing, HOD, Biology, RCU)

A hierarchy of research areas that can be loosely coupled around the dichotomies of pure/applied and hard/soft can be shown to exist within the discipline and this is of importance to the judgements made within the RAE. However, some members of staff question whether this 'pure' research is universally awarded greater value within the institutional context. Dr Lester, for example, a Research Fellow at GCU argues that 'applied' research is also highly valued because of its ability to attract greater levels of funding from charities and commercial sponsors. Thus, he believes that his own research, which would be characterised as 'pure' research is less valued because of low levels of funding. Although areas of research such as Molecular Biology are highly esteemed within the research community and also attract high levels of funding, this equation of esteem and funding is not always so clearly drawn. For this reason, therefore, Biology departments like the one at RCU look to develop their research potential in those areas that are both highly valued and capable of attracting funds.

An (eminent Professor) pointed out to us that all of the five star departments in Biological Sciences are very big in Biotechnology. So if we want to move to a (higher grade) then we have to move in the direction of Molecular Biology. So we are currently trying to find a way of bringing a Biotechnology group into the department.  
(Professor Laing, HOD, Biology, RCU).

What is important is the extent to which there is a conflict over the principles of evaluation of different forms of research. This issue is clearly intertwined with the RAE criteria, which I will now discuss in more detail.

The general principles of criteria set out in the RAE included the definition of research as “an original contribution to knowledge” and the classification of research work and members of staff as being either of national or international standing (see Chapter One). The national and international distinction was the main determinant of the grades 1 - 5\* awarded to departments. The full list of criteria set out by the Biology RAE panel is shown in Appendix 6.

For the Biology RAE submission at GCU, one of the main criteria for exclusion and inclusion of staff was their ability to be classified as having an international reputation. The main determinants of this were for example, invitations to speak at international conferences and collaborations with members of staff at universities abroad. This was the key distinction which stopped Dr Merrygold from being put forward in the submission for the department since he was not deemed to have an international reputation.

It was not a question of publications. I had plenty of publications. It was a strategy decision. This department (was) trying (for a high RAE rating), you know that of course, the question was how many international em committees were you on. It wasn't a question of publications, there were plenty of publications in good journals but it was a question em ... probably as you know for a (high grade) everybody...everyone has an international reputation, ...or some do and some have a national reputation. We had to state what international committees are you on, have you worked abroad eh where have you been working abroad recently and what international meetings... I couldn't show sufficient international meetings...? (Dr Merrygold, Biologist, GCU)

A decision not to put a member of staff forward in the RAE submission may be as Dr Merrygold suggests no more than a strategic decision to maximise the grade awarded to the department. However, the implications of these kinds of decisions extend beyond the RAE submission. They imply an important site of struggle of classification within academia over the determination of a legitimate claim for researcher status. What are the points of contention over this struggle for classification within the process of the RAE and how do these fit with the forms of classification within the field of Biology and the sub-areas of research activity? Before discussing this in more detail, I will examine the forms of *research capital*, which are operative within the field of Biology.

The organisation of research activity within the Biology department at GCU is diverse both in terms of the social organisation of staff and their work and the way in which the research work itself is carried out.

There are members of staff like Professor Mulligan who has a research group of about sixteen staff of research assistants, laboratory assistant and postdoctoral researchers, all of whom he has to supervise. Other members of staff such as Dr Malone and Dr Martin have no laboratory and no research team which they have to direct. Following Bourdieu, one can determine the specific forms of scientific power which individual members of staff possess in terms of their accumulation of research (or scientific) capital. The example of material (or economic capital) within Biology would refer to the material representations of research 'wealth' such as well-equipped laboratories, qualified research staff and substantial research funding. There was a large variation in the



distribution of such forms of material capital and evidence of attempts to accumulate this form of capital was evident amongst most but not all of the academic staff interviewed. Struggles over equipment and laboratory space were referred to particularly in research committee meetings. The accumulation of social capital within research areas can also be evidenced. In Biology there was a lot of collaboration and joint projects with people working together between national and international institutions. Some areas of research necessitate a form of collaboration when a particular researcher or research group

Research work can also be divided into those Biologists who, as Bourdieu maintained, “invest above all in production and secondarily, in the work of representation which contributes to the accumulation of a symbolic capital of external renown” (Bourdieu, 1988). Given the important national and international distinction used in the RAE, the incidence of conference attendance and other activities to boost ‘external renown’ is evident among the Biologists interviewed. Some lament the pressure put upon them to chase such acclaim and ‘international renown’ when they feel that they are more successfully engaged productively in the laboratory.

In terms of the practices of academics, therefore, the question is raised of how strategies and interests are developed within the context of these multiple ideational and organisational structures. The differentiation of academic and research work can be more fully explored by looking at individual cases of Biologists within these departments.

## **Structural Positioning and the Construction of a Biological ‘Habitus’: changing dispositions and practices**

The Biologists within these departments do not simply reproduce the ideational structures within the university and disciplinary field, they also construct and resist them. This section looks at how these structures are mediated through the experiences of these academics situated within a department in a particular institution. This analysis will also include a discussion of the perceptions that these Biologists have on the RAE and the way in which the demands of this process, again mediated through the situation within a particular university department, has on their dispositions and practices.

Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ is complex (see chapter three) but put simply, it refers to the internalisation of the social structure of individual agents. In the previous sections I have argued that academics are situated within a myriad of institutional and disciplinary structures. The field is the site of construction of strategies and struggles based on the ‘interests’ and dispositions inherent within the habitus. Agents in a particular field are endowed with a ‘practical sense’ or a ‘feel for the game’ which orients their actions. This is no mechanical process where individual agents are conditioned or predisposed to act in a particular way since there are multiple configurations of possible social action in any field (see chapter three).

In order to look at the ‘academic’ or ‘Biological’ habitus one can study the many social and cultural influences that shape a person’s ‘practical sense’. In this study, I will focus

only on the immediate institutional and disciplinary location of academic agents. Wider structural and cultural influences must be taken up in a further study. The competing strategies and struggles for the accumulation of symbolic capital (material social and cultural) undertaken by these Biologists, based on their position within the field, will be the main focus of analysis.

There were seventeen members of staff interviewed in Biology at GCU and nineteen members of staff interviewed within Biology at RCU. The table in Appendix 7 and 8 show the specific characteristics of the members of staff interviewed. There is a sample of staff from each of the positions within the departments, Professors, Research Professors, Principal Lecturers, Research Fellows, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers. Of the nineteen academics interviewed at RCU, thirteen were considered research active and submitted for the RAE. Of the remaining six, Dr Forster, Dr Francis and Dr Davies would consider themselves not research active whilst Dr Conway, Dr Jennings and Dr Castello are engaged in research. Of the seventeen members of staff that were interviewed at GCU, eleven were submitted in the RAE as research active. The remaining six would all consider themselves research active despite their non-inclusion.

Each of these academics can be considered a 'case'. They all represent one possible example of a social location within the myriad of institutional and disciplinary structures. Thus, the individuality of the academic and their social positioning can be grasped and the institutional and disciplinary field context within which they are situated (Grenfell and James, 1998). Some of the Biologists within the study will now be discussed in more

detail in order to further the themes presented in the previous sections. These include the principles of differentiation of academic and research work, the specific forms of symbolic capital and the struggles for classification. What are the particular *dispositions* and *practices* of Biologists in these university departments and how are they differentiated?

Individual cases of staff will form two groupings, those classified as research active and those classified as non-research active for RAE purposes. This form of differentiation of academics has been shown in the previous sections to correspond to the most significant classification of staff working in university departments. The cases will include four members of staff from the two departments who are classified as research active (for RAE purposes), including one Research Professor, one Professor, one Research Fellow and one Senior Lecturer. From the group classified as non-research active they are all Senior Lecturers.

Details of the staff interviewed in each Biology department are given in Appendix 7 and 8. A comparison of dates of staff joining the department (where available) and the status of being research active shows that everyone interviewed in each of the Biology departments who was classified as research active and submitted for the 1996 RAE, joined the department after 1979. On the other hand, all of the staff interviewed who were classified as non-research active joined the department between 1965 and 1975. Two members of staff who joined during this period were classified as research active. These cases show that newer members of staff are more research oriented (at least in terms of

the criteria measured by the RAE) than those staff joining the department in an earlier period. This implies that the 'academic habitus' of newer members of staff in Biology is more disposed to research and that their 'feel' for the research game is more central to their 'practical sense' of academic work.

### **Biology Staff Classified as Research Active**

#### *Professor Mulligan (GCU)*

Professor Mulligan has been in the Biology department at GCU since 1995. Prior to his position at GCU he has held academic posts at other universities. In his position at GCU he concentrates his efforts solely on research. His title is Research Professor and he was employed explicitly to make a direct contribution to the research activity within the department. He does no teaching in the department except for a nominal few hours of postgraduate teaching, which he describes as 'fun'. This contact with students and other teaching staff (in meetings) also gives him some sense of being included within the department, as he often feels rather separate in his secluded research environment. He talks of 'peninsular research laboratories'. His lack of what is termed academic capital (in the form of teaching and participation in Teaching Committees), however, can be compared to his accumulation of research capital. This includes his position as a member of the research committee within the department, one that few members of staff in the department hold.

Within the institution he has a wealth of research capital both material and social. He is the director of a large laboratory and a research group of sixteen people, including technicians, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students. He describes a kind of pyramid structure that characterises the interaction between him and the research staff. He is the director of the research at the apex and there is some devolving of supervision with postdoctoral researchers supervising research assistants and research students. His research, therefore, is underpinned by a base of research staff.

Professor Mulligan does very little laboratory work himself and indeed he emphasises that his role is primarily in a supervisory capacity, where often the postdoctoral researcher is the expert and has the technical ability. He says, “I can focus on what needs to be done and how it needs to be done without knowing how to do it”. His role, therefore, is to manage and direct the activity, the “the hand waving person” with the “big picture view”. He characterises his three primary roles as being to manage, to write and to raise money. He confesses to having had little training in either managing staff or writing grant proposals, things which he spends a large proportion of his time doing. The time spent is hard to quantify in days or weeks since the activity fluctuates, although the need to ensure a steady flow of funding makes grant applications a constant activity.

The need for a continuous flow of income is felt by Professor Mulligan to be a necessity not only to the on-going production of research but also the employment of his research team. Being the only person with a university paid salary whilst all of his staff are on

'soft money' (paid from research grants), Professor Mulligan feels a duty to ensure the continued employment of his staff. Applying for and being awarded research grants, however, is a fickle business and leads to a situation for him of "unrelenting pressure and lack of certainty". The funding situation within the department where there are very few internal research funds and the huge cost of the research work, including laboratory and staff costs means that Professor Mulligan is under constant pressure to apply for and be successful in being awarded research grants. For this reason, much of his time is spent on formulating and presenting research proposals to funding bodies.

His other main activity is the presentation of the research work in terms of publications and lectures at conferences and meetings. The importance of publications for the symbolic value of one's research is evidenced both by the criteria used in the RAE and in the general perception of the success of one's work. Professor Mulligan argues that the recognition given to publications in prestigious journal articles (symbolic capital) is imperative for success in receiving grants (material capital), which in turn is necessary for the continuation of research work. He insists that the primary reason for publication is for the greater good of scientific enquiry but it also has the added advantage of establishing a 'successfully productive' reputation with funding bodies.

...it is important to make your information public domain so that other people can capitalise on that and the whole field moves forward incrementally as a result of everyone's published things. So if you don't publish you are not part of that no matter how good your stuff is. So I mean that's really the reason for publishing and that is why the funding bodies want to see publications because they want to fund research that moves science forward. So I mean ultimately it is a good reason. But the short term reason is that if you have got a nice list of publications every year

coming out then people think that you are productive and therefore if you are productive you should be given more funds if you have a good idea.

(Professor Mulligan, Biology, RCU)

The main activities of Professor Mulligan, therefore, have to be towards the presentation of the research work in the form of publications and conference presentations. This involves, therefore the “work of representation” which contributes to the accumulation of “a symbolic capital of external renown” (Bourdieu, 1988). Professor Mulligan’s strategy is to increase where possible this form of symbolic capital. He does not believe this to be the primary goal of his endeavors (as the quotation above suggests, the primary interest is in the development of scientific inquiry), however, the symbolic value of his activities, particularly for funding purposes and for RAE submissions is not to be underestimated.

Professor Mulligan is less involved in the production side of the research work within the laboratory since he has a more distant directorial role in supervising the research team. This frees up his time to be spent in grant applications and presentation of the research work. This distinction between production and presentation, however, is not always so divided, as the case of the next Biology Professor demonstrates.



*Professor Warner (RCU)*

Professor Warner in contrast to the practices of Professor Mulligan spends much of his time in the laboratory. He is involved with all of the research work. This situation is partly because he does not have a large research team, although he is one of a limited number of people in the Biology school to have research staff. He currently has two technicians, one postdoctoral researcher and postgraduate students. He also has a large laboratory space that is well equipped. He describes himself as having a 'drive for science work' and works very long hours in the laboratory. He never takes coffee or lunch breaks and can be found in his laboratory from early morning until late evening.

**Professor Warner:** Well as far as I am concerned the normal working day is part time because when I get so enthusiastic my wife, my daughter is doing nursing and sometimes she has a seven o' clock shift at the local hospital so I drive over here about half past six in the morning and it wouldn't be unusual for me to still be here at eight or nine at night the same day. What makes me tired is things not working you know. I don't actually get tired by the physical effort the work but worry when things don't go well or worry when you don't get a grant or...

**Interviewer:** So long as things are ticking over...

**Professor Warner:** So long as I can see the way ahead I like working in the lab.

**Interviewer:** So in terms of other duties within the university do you attend committee meetings?

**Professor Warner:** I'm not a committee meeting, you can't do everything and I don't try. A typical situation would be that I would go to a board meeting and I'll have a piece of paper with me and I will doodle and start thinking about my next experiment or analysing the results of my last one. I go, I listen when there is something particularly relevant to me but most of the things that are relevant to me are research based, research facilities, funding... em I teach on (a course) and I enjoy that but there is no way in which I could function at the level I do in research if I had lots of teaching...

He is very hands on and also takes part in menial tasks within the laboratory (such as labelling bottles) as a means of demonstrating to his staff how important each individual task is to the overall scientific enterprise. He believes that he has a lot of autonomy in his work, arguing that 'I am driving myself and not being driven'.

Professor Warner has been at RCU since 1978 and has been a Professor since 1992. After securing a grant from a commercial organisation and further grant money from a government scheme, he moved into his current area of research. He describes what he sees as a 'fair element of good fortune' in his 'choosing the right topic at the right time' and managing to get funding to support it. This research area has resulted in the work being highly commercially successful. His research was not always so successful and he compares his current situation of a "charmed existence" to his earlier years when he was always getting "poor results" from his experiments and "nobody was interested in (my) work". He also feels particularly valued within the institution.

Professor Warner plays an important role in the research environment of the school. He sees his research as being central to his position. His primary aims are to get grants, write papers and enhance the research profile of the school. He already has accumulated substantial research capital in a variety of ways including, *materially* with his commercial success, *socially* with his collaborations across the globe and invitations to international conferences and *symbolically* with a large number of research publications (in the last two years his name has appeared on over one hundred publications). And he has articles in highly rated journals such as 'The Lancet'.

Professor Warner spends much time in the laboratory due to lack of staff and also his enjoyment of the productive side of science. Institutional circumstances and lack of research funding means that he is involved in much of the research work in the laboratory. He does believe, however, that more support could be given to his research efforts, particularly in the employment of research staff.

Professor Warner is committed to his research and it is within this area of academic work that he devotes his struggles for recognition. He thinks that teaching can be enjoyed as 'an interesting sideline' and describes himself as 'not a committee person' with little time for departmental administration.

**Interviewer:** So you yourself would feel quite loyal to this institution?

**Professor Warner:** Oh it suits me, it suits me to a T. When you have been in an institution as long as this, you have been fortunate enough to be well respected by people around you. It is like... once I come in through that door it is my own little world here. Project students come in and out but em yeah I have got a very well equipped laboratory. We have the radio on. We make our own rules. As long as we are producing papers nobody can, nobody would want to attack us or slow me down. I am doing just what the university wants even down to the commercialisation.

Professor Warner feels highly valued within the School as his research continues to be successful. Research fortunes however can decline as well as rise as the case of the next Biologist shows.

*Dr Stanton (GCU)*

Dr Stanton came to the Biology department in 1989. He was given a reduced teaching load on his arrival in order that he could concentrate his energies on building up his research work. The development of his research was aided by a start up grant of £20,000, which was modest in terms of the necessary finance for molecular Biology (approximately 10 to 12 thousand pounds per year is needed for consumables alone). Dr Stanton went on to receive multiple grants from a variety of sources including the BBSRC, Medical Research Council and the European Union. Like Professor Mulligan, therefore he is dependent on the awarding of funds from research councils and charities in order for his research to be maintained. When research funding becomes limited research capital is quickly diminished. For example, he had a group of 12 research staff working with him on these various research projects. However, he now has only two grants and his research staff has been reduced to four: one technician, one research student and two postdoctoral researchers.

Dr Stanton produces a lot of publications that are mainly multi-authored. He is criticised for this in the department. However, his research firstly, is dependent on one particular Professor (at another university) for the materials he needs for research. So this person must always be cited in his work. Secondly, he feels that he should help people in their careers. So he includes the names of his research staff. "People say it is not the best way to operate but they can like it or lump it", he maintains. Given his changing fortunes he is uncertain of his success for the future. His accumulation of research capital is not

consistent with demands of the department and particularly RAE criteria. He has too many multi-authored publications which are believed by the authors of the RAE submission for the department to be accorded less value for RAE purposes (although this is not stated in the Panel's list of criteria). His research funding has been reduced and subsequently he has less research staff. The perennial problem however is, where one can apply for funding.

Other Biologists, however, have difficulties obtaining funding at all, for a number of reasons not least of which is the type of research that one is engaged in. The next Biologist demonstrates the problems involved.

*Dr Lester (GCU)*

Dr Lester has been a member of staff in Biology at GCU for 13 years. He worked as a postdoctoral researcher with a Professor in the department for six years. He then won a career development fellowship from the Wellcome Trust, which is his current position. He is not involved in teaching since his fellowship stipulates that he should be totally dedicated to research work.

Having a Wellcome Trust grant also prevents you from applying for any other research money. Their aim is to focus you entirely on doing bench work yourself and not to become an administrator or a teacher and so they are particularly keen for people not to get sidetracked into doing paperwork for the department. Very much they want the scientist to remain at the bench doing practical work and to remain creative. (Dr Lester, Biology, GCU)

The stipulations given by his Trust are contrary both to his potential integration within the department and his ability to build a research grouping by applying for further research money. Dr Lester feels that his position within the department is rather contradictory since he is both a valued part of the department (his fellowship is a valuable asset) and also a rather marginal figure in that he has no official teaching or research status. This can place him in a difficult position in terms of things like departmental meetings. It is not entirely clear whether he should attend and what he should know. Since he does very little teaching there no point in him attending Subject Committee meetings. Dr Lester's position within the department is uncertain in terms of both his official status and his future as a member of staff. For example, he does not have his own office with his "name on the door". He was led to believe that if he was successful in securing the fellowship he would be given his own office and there was a very strong possibility of him receiving an official appointment. This resulted in him refusing a permanent job offer at another university.

Dr Lester's accumulation of research capital is primarily symbolic (publications). No material (grants) because of 'pure' research and no social (few research staff). Although he does have collaborations externally and he presents his work at international conferences. However, due to his unique funding arrangement much of his time is spent in the laboratory. He is therefore in a contradictory situation where he has research capital but is not part of the general academic work of the department, nor is able to increase his reputation in research, particularly through increased external funding.

Dr Lester, however, does represent a particular form of academic habitus. One which is oriented towards research and with a very definite view on the competitive nature of science and expressing particularly explicit strategies and interests. This may be because of his ambiguous position and that his experience of this has heightened his awareness of the contradictory expectations and demands within academic life. The following interview extract begins with him discussing the ‘politics of authorship’ with publications.

**Dr Lester:** So consequently that it is the way that we are going to proceed. And that again is partly a cosmetic exercise to show again the department and the outside world that you are researching on your own. In actual fact it makes no difference to Professor Wilson to have his name on the paper or not. I prefer it if it was because he is obviously contributing some academic input. But then by doing that it then implies that he has the majority academic input which is not correct. So consequently it is easier on occasion to actually leave his name off and just have my name and my staff’s name. There is a certain degree of politics involved, a large degree of politics involved actually. To be seen to be is what is more important than what you are sometimes.

**Interviewer:** Listening to you it seems obvious that a large amount of thought has to be put into the pros and cons of ...?

**Dr Lester:** I think very much so. You have an audience within the department, you have an audience outside the department and you have your funding body which is difficult. You have to convince all of those people. Obviously to get another research project from the Wellcome Trust you have to show that the project has been successful and the people who review your project will be scientists in or outside the country which drives to a large extent the publications, the number of conferences you go to, which conferences you go to and as I say the politics, the authorship of it. That is very, very important.

Dr Lester is struggling to maximise the symbolic value of his work in the form of primary authorship of publications. His predicament as a Research Fellow and his need to respond to different authorities with their own definitions of research success places him in many

contradictory situations. The ambiguity of demands and expectations, however, is even more difficult where one's work is felt to be undervalued and overlooked. This is particularly the case with members of staff who were not put forward in the RAE submission.

### **Biology Staff Classified as Non-Research Active**

#### **Dr Merrygold (GCU)**

Dr Merrygold has been in the Biology department at GCU for thirty years. He completed his PhD at London University and worked as a scientific officer and then Lecturer at Kings College before coming to GCU. He has his own research group of five people, one postdoctoral researcher, two research students and two technicians. He spends his time on teaching, discussing research progress with his staff and writing grant proposals. He meets with his technicians every day, research students every two weeks and holds monthly meetings with the postdoctoral researchers.

During the period of the RAE Dr Merrygold was Chairman of the Subject Committee that involved him in a lot of administrative duties over this time. He managed to maintain his teaching and research activity. However, despite his successful research record, funding from a multitude of sources and a list of publications, he was not included in the RAE submission. Dr Merrygold was unhappy about this decision and he is uncertain about



how his work is being judged or whether he will merit future inclusion in the RAE. He was informed that his profile is not perceived to be *international*. In response to this he feels that it is pointless for him to go travelling round the world when his work, his staff and his laboratory are here in the department.

Dr Merrygold has accumulated similar forms of research capital accumulation to the other members of staff in the department. He is involved both in the laboratory work (although this is only possible in vacation time) and the presentation and development of his research work, including applying for research funding. The differences between him and staff classified as 'research active' were that Dr Merrygold held the administrative post of Subject Committee Chair, a role which took up more than the nominated 20% of time. For this reason, he had less time to spend on research. Furthermore, this responsibility meant a close involvement with departmental and institutional matters. During the period prior to the 1996 RAE, therefore, he did not have research links with universities from other nations nor had he travelled to international conferences. He does not believe that the possibility of international links is necessarily a constant in research work since it depends on what is appropriate for the development of research in a particular area.

**Dr Merrygold:** There are certainly some research projects where there are particular groups and there are examples in this department, I think people you have probably talked to, where there are particular people related to them in different countries and it is very sensible. But there is no point in doing it just for the sake of being able to say you are doing it, it is pointless.

**Interviewer:** So it would only be worthwhile if it was going to further your research?

**Dr Merrygold:** That's right and in some cases it could do but em it depends on the particular field you are in, what you are doing and where you are going and what is happening in other places.

**Interviewer:** Yes that's why I asked, when I used the word appropriate I meant as a measure of quality.

**Dr Merrygold:** I think it relates to quality in the sense that...*pause*...the more your international reputation is known the more people will suggest collaborations of various kinds. So I mean it must relate to quality but I am not saying that it is a simple linear relationship. It depends, and there are certainly examples where there are international collaborations, which I don't feel, are particularly challenging or particularly sophisticated. So it relates to quality but it is an oversimplification.

The reason for the non inclusion of Dr Merrygold was that he did not appear to have an *international* reputation in research. The strategy of the department was to achieve a high rating in the RAE and therefore had to have a majority of staff of international acclaim. However, the precise meaning of what 'international reputation' means is not at all simple and academics raise the question of whether it is a measure that can be applied at all times to research work. Dr Merrygold resists the possibility of re-orienting his practices to include more overseas research work but for this he is excluded from the classification of being 'research active', something which he feels undermines the value of his work.

Other members of staff in the department who were not included in the RAE submission were excluded for different reasons.

*Dr Eccles (GCU)*

On first introducing himself Dr Eccles presented me with a timetable of events which had happened to him over the course of the previous few months. They included a recounting of various meetings he had had with the head of department and the personnel department. The meetings with the head were to discuss his research plans specifically with regard to his attempt to secure research funding. The meetings with Personnel were to discuss the proposal of early retirement that had been made to him. He was very resistant to the idea of early retirement feeling that he still had scientific work that he wanted to finish. From the point of view of the department, however, despite his possession of the required list of publications he was not defined as research active and was not put forward in the submission to the RAE.

Dr Eccles has been in the Biology department at GCU since 1969. He came here when it was still a “building site”. He has one graduate student working with him. In his first meeting with the head of department, it was made clear to him that he should be applying for research grants and on subsequent meeting he was asked to provide evidence of this activity. At this time he was particularly busy with teaching and working on the examinations committee. Despite the fact that these initial meetings were conducted in a non judgmental and helpful way he felt very pressurised and could not see how it was possible for him to meet the demands.

Dr Eccles suffered from severe stress during this period. He felt unwanted within his department and certainly undervalued as an academic. He had taken pride in a complimentary letter sent to him on his good work done on the exams committee. However, this ultimately held no comfort for him as he felt that due to his inability to attract research funding he was 'in bad grace', despite the fact that his research area needed little money to finance it. His status within the department is as yet uncertain but he intends to remain until at least retirement age.

Dr Eccles does not have large research grants or a research team. He argues that his research is cheap to do and requires little funding to be maintained. He also has no international research collaborations or links, although he was invited to talk at two international conferences. For this reason, his research strategies and interests are at odds with the department, which requires staff to have research capital consistent with RAE criteria.

Dr Eccles research capital, therefore, did not fit with a department aiming for a high rating in the RAE. Even in departments with lower expectations of their possible RAE rating, however, staff not involved in research feel that they are undervalued, as the next Biologist shows.

*Dr Forster (RCU)*

Dr Forster's main activities in the school of Biology at RCU are teaching and administration. He made a conscious choice to stop doing research because he wanted to concentrate his energies on teaching students.

Actual research interests, what people regard as research interests I don't have any. So I haven't done active research, experimental research for a long time. In terms of things that I do in addition to my teaching.

(Dr Forster, Biology, RCU)

He continues with research interests and scholarship that he feels helps to give practical examples and provide a positive link with his teaching activities. He is a section leader within Biology and this takes up a large proportion of his time. He is prepared to do more teaching than other research active members of staff but he is concerned that his worth as a teacher is not properly valued. He believes that despite the fact that evaluations for teaching are carried out, they are not used to any effect such that teachers who do a good job are rewarded or valued within the university.

Dr Forster does not have a high volume of research capital in terms of any of the RAE measures of funding, publications or international reputation. His strategies and interests do not conform with the strategies and interests of the department in terms of raising their research profile and RAE rating. Dr Forster is resistant to change or modify his practices.

He argues instead for the value of research. The department accepts that not everyone can be involved in research activity that can contribute to RAE measures. So there is a process to differentiate the activities of members of staff (hence the proposed banding of teaching and research loads).

Dr Forster believes, however, that his position and activities in teaching and administration are less valued within the department with no acknowledgement given for work done well.

I mean if one has senior administrators and they acknowledge the fact that research, teaching and administration are three prongs that have to be covered and therefore different people could be doing that then all three somehow should be monitored and should be evaluated to actually say look we acknowledge the fact that this person is good at it and that person is bad at it and that credit should be given, it should be publicly acknowledged. Whereas as it is you tend to find that people put in, like our departmental bulletin, you get regular notes saying congratulations to so and so who just got this grant or somebody who has just written up their PhD or whatever but you don't ever see notes saying congratulations to so and so for doing a good course on, or doing a good job on administering this or setting up something novel in relation to their teaching or administrative duties. And it just seems in that sense, one feels you are pottering around in the background and you may be achieving very nice things but no one is actually crediting that other than perhaps your immediate colleagues eh and even sort of senior folks. It is quite often one would go down the corridor and you can hear them saying what is happening with this research project or what is happening with that thing or that research experiment. But people don't ask you about what happened with that project you were doing in relation to resource based learning or modifying that module or whatever. And you sit there thinking these things are not on a par even though in principle one says they are supposed to be.

(Dr Forster, Biology, RCU)

The most salient issue to come through from the cases of these individual Biologists is the extent of the differentiation between academics on their activities and practices within these university departments. In contrast to the picture painted of the homogeneous profession (Scott, 1984), the current situation is more an accentuation of the differentiation of the profession (Halsey, 1995). The number of research staff in Biology on temporary contracts is a high percentage nationally (62%) and is particularly high in departments with high research productivity such as GCU. The brief profiles given on the few members of staff within the Biology departments at GCU and RCU begin to give some insight into the differentiation of academic and research practices that exist within the same discipline, within the same department and even for academics at different points in their careers.

The emphasis on the importance of research activity within both of these departments at an institutional and department level is indisputably high. Organisation of research activity and the amount of effort and forward planning given to the RAE submission give testimony to this. Institutions and departments are concerned to raise their symbolic capital in the form of a high RAE rating since significant financial and reputational rewards can be gained. A multitude of strategies and forward planning of research activity both at an institutional and departmental level has been instigated in both universities. Issues discussed included, the membership of research committees, role of head of department, decision-making on research strategies and RAE submissions.

In each department the RAE submission became the responsibility primarily of the head of department at GCU and the Research Director at RCU. Research committee organisation was different in each department, with a greater involvement of staff across the department at RCU. Research planning in each department, therefore, assumes a more 'managerial' organisation than the 'collegial' organisation of teaching activities. The managerial, organisational and ideational structures within each department can be seen to be influenced by the demands not simply of RAE but by the universities need to increase the amount of capital funding, particularly in the case of Biology which is a high cost science. This was particularly the case at GCU where substantial (often in excess of £1M) funds were needed to maintain research activities.

Institutional diversity was apparent, despite a common aim of increasing research activity. At RCU there was a recognition that not all staff could be or wanted to be classified as research active. At GCU, on the other hand, all staff were expected to be involved in research. Within research work, however, there were differential evaluations of research activity. The research activities of staff were analysed as a process of accumulating forms of research capital (symbolic, material, social and cultural). These included, the possession of a research laboratory, a research team and research funding (material), publications (symbolic), international links and renown (social). Within particular sub-areas of research there was also differential value attached to, for example the evaluation of 'pure' v's 'applied' research (Becher, 1989). Forms of research capital discussed were closely related to the criteria set out by the RAE panel. These criteria were seen to influence not only the construction of the RAE submission for each



department but also the organisation and planning of research activities. However, the definition of particular criteria was not always clear and there were multiple interpretations of what would be most highly valued by the panel. For example, the belief that multi-authored journal articles would be of lesser value than single or joint authored papers.

The 'feel for the research game', therefore, the understanding of the rules and principles of evaluation goes beyond the stated principles and criteria set out in the RAE. Many of the interviewees discussed the multiple audience (and therefore evaluators) for their work. Dr Lester, for example, was caught between the demands of the department and those of his funders. Other members of staff struggled to have their research recognised and valued and expressed confusion over the principles governing that evaluation. This was particularly the case for Dr Merrygold. The 'practical sense' and 'feel for the game' of many of these Biologists, therefore, has been undermined as the RAE has dramatically altered the principles of evaluation of their research work.

One of the main issues raised in this chapter of whether academics are becoming increasingly more polarised between those classified as research active and those classified as non-research active. And whether the struggle for classification of being research active (based on RAE criteria) is changing the practices of Biologists and subsequently the 'practical sense' and 'feel for the game' of these members of staff. Evidence from the Biologists at GCU and RCU suggest that this is the case. The next

chapter will investigate the experience of academics within the Sociology department at these universities.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are approximate. They are calculated from table of data on research assessment research active staff (THES, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1996). Staff numbers are constantly in flux so approximate figures are appropriate in this case.

<sup>2</sup> A pseudonym is used here.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### **Sociological Divisions: an Investigation of Two Sociology Departments**

I am suggesting only that when we consider the current disagreements among sociologists, we find that many of them are not so much cognitive oppositions as contrasting evaluations of the worth of one and another kind of sociological work. They are bids for support by the social system of sociologists. (Merton, 1970: 185)

Sociology can be characterised as a collection of people or as a collection of intellectual ‘things’. In the first instance, the interest lies in sociology “as a profession, a labour process, a training and socialisation regime, a public, a faculty, a department”, whilst in the second concern is shifted to the formation of sociological production, the “writings, ideas, propositions, findings, definitions, meanings, symbols” (Winsborough, 1992: 269). The interesting question for this project is that of the relationship between the population of sociologists, their organisation both within and out with institutions and the process and production of sociological knowledge.

Winsborough (1992) investigated firstly, the differences in what he called ‘rounds-of-life’ for members of staff within American sociology departments and those within research centres in a department setting and the extent to which positioning with a variety of institutional locations led them “to see the organisation and extent of sociological knowledge differently” (Winsborough, 1992: 271). He argues that the work of staff in

department centres is less connected to the institutional context since there is less involvement by these staff in teaching and they have no formal position within the organisation of the university. For this reason, therefore, he posits a number of tensions between departments and centres. These organisational and structural tensions can be summarised as follows; 1) there is a fracturing of the department into different groups, 2) teaching activities may be abandoned by centre members, 3) funding is concentrated into the relatively wealthy centres. Furthermore, in terms of the organisation of sociological knowledge, he argues that involvement in teaching activity encourages a 'centripetal' focus on the discipline and particularly the central 'core' of the disciplinary structure across the department as a whole. Research centres, on the other hand, encourage 'centrifugal' tendencies, which means that they operate in a way which 'tends to fracture the disciplinary core' (Winsborough, 1992: 30) by being more inward focused and concentrating on specialised research areas or more outward looking by being more interdisciplinary focused.

The organisation of research activities within departments, therefore, has important implications both for the working lives of academic staff and the construction of sociological knowledge. The extent of differentiation within sociological work, however, may not be wholly related to the conditions of production within university settings but also to the inherent tensions within the discipline. Sociology is described as a 'fragile and uncertain discipline' (Halliday and Janowitz, 1992) or as an 'archipelago of islands of specialisation' (Crane and Small, 1992). This implies a lack of coherent structure between areas of specialisation and no general consensus on the meaning of sociology

and what could be considered a 'generic' sociology. This is supported by examples of in-depth analysis of particular institutional settings such as the history of the 'Chicago School' (Abbott, 1999). In this depiction of the school, Abbott (1999) argues that despite the perceived compatibility of research focus and interest within the school, there was sharp conflict among staff over the very meaning of 'sociology' and what sociology should represent. The extent of divergence and convergence varied across time and as members of staff changed.

Contrasting evaluations are given as to the worth of particular kinds of sociology, even what counts as 'sociological'. Merton (1970) highlights a number of polemics within sociology both in terms of the organisation of knowledge and the organisation of research production. For example, he discusses firstly, the idea of the trivial versus the important within sociology, the "alleged cleavage" between substantive sociology and methodology, formal (abstract) sociology and concrete sociology and finally, the differences between the lone scholar and the research team. In the later example, Merton (1970) makes the claim that the sociological mind is being bureaucratised in terms of the drive for research funding and the need to organise and support research teams. Abbott (1999) also makes the distinction between the 'bureaucratic' and the 'artisan' approach to the production of sociological knowledge.

The organisational setting of research activities and the means by which sociological work is evaluated is the main focus of this chapter. Focusing on the two sociology departments at Golden County University and Royal County University, I will explore in

detail the organisation of research work, and academic work in general, within these two departments and the struggle for recognition and positive evaluation of their work by the sociologists interviewed. The organisational, managerial and ideational structures within these two institutions will be discussed. Particular attention will be paid to the RAE submission and processes and the perceptions of academic staff on the evaluation of research work within the RAE. I will then discuss the principles of differentiation in academic and research work including, the construction of symbolic capital within the sociology field and the academic field. Finally, I will explore the positioning of Sociologists within their institutional and disciplinary location and the construction of a sociological 'habitus'.

### **Organisational, Managerial and Ideational Structures within the Sociology Departments**

This department of Sociology at GCU was opened when the university was established in the early 1960s. The tradition of the university was to be based primarily on the Oxbridge model of a system of colleges. Departments were ordinarily located in a particular college but they held no formal status within the university system. As the head of department explains:

...when the university was first set up under (the founder) he refused to recognise the existence of departments. He saw universities as sort of glorified Oxford Colleges. So Subject Committees were set up...because Subject Committees have to exist because they had to agree curriculum and they had to agree degree results

and so on. So they have a formal status. Departments didn't have a formal status, there was no such thing, and gradually of course departments have emerged. Departments are the sociological reality but there isn't a formal organisation for running a department. There is now a formal head of department, which there wasn't before, and there is therefore a division of labour, division of responsibility between head of department and Subject Committee, which is a little uneasy. (Professor Davenport, HOD, Sociology, GCU)

The head of department assumes responsibility for financial decisions within the department and making sure that staff carry out their various responsibilities for teaching, research and administration. The present head of department has been in post for four years and he argues that the position has changed from being a routine administrative job where one is simply a "glorified office worker", to one where you need to be an executive manager, formulating and implementing policy. He maintains that "you have to formulate policy statements. You have to show how you are going to save this amount of money over the next (number) of years. You have to show where the department is going in terms of its research profile, how any new appointment will fit into that. Everything is much more *proactive* (my emphasis)". The role of the head of department is therefore very central to the link between the department and central administration. The head must be highly proactive and responsive to the policy and monitoring procedures of central administration. This situation also indicates a highly individualised managerial role for the head. However, the more 'collegial' structure of the Subject Committee militates against such a straightforward interpretation of the organisational structures.

The Subject Committee deals primarily with teaching and the student curriculum, general teaching and student matters. It functions like the 'Parliament' (Dr Leighton, Sociology, GCU) of the department. There are a number of subcommittees such as the various

teaching committees and the research committee. Decisions taken at sub-committee meetings will be taken back to the Subject Committee in order to be given the seal of approval. Dr Abrams is Chair of the Subject Committee and he explains about the responsibility of this body as follows:

Well it's particularly concerned with the organisation of undergraduate degrees and any alterations to those undergraduate degrees... It is less concerned with postgraduate work and research aspects of the department. We do have a separate research committee in the department which I don't sit on and which although it is a sub committee technically of the Subject Committees...em the issues that it deals with or its workings and so on tends to be more independent of the Subject Committees than any of the other sub committees. So my role is to be concerned with the everyday running of teaching...

(Dr Abrams, Sociology, GCU)

The department has a strong teaching tradition and this is formalised in the core concerns of the Subject Committee. This key decision making body is focused primarily on teaching and student matters. This concern with teaching is reflected in many of the comments made by individual lecturers. For example, one lecturer commented on his own feelings about teaching as well as the departmental commitment to students.

So you know I wanted to write a bit but it wasn't why I came into academic life, I mean I love teaching, I love contact with students...this university had a commitment to teaching right from the beginning...and that tradition is strong at GCU.

(Mr Robertson, Sociology, GCU)

Teaching activities create a sense of unification within the department, mainly because it is an area where everyone has similar concerns in common. This illustrates the



‘centripetal’ tendency within departments where everyone is united around the disciplinary core with respect to teaching (Winsborough, 1992).

Evidence for the commitment to teaching is given by members of staff in relation to the practices of small group teaching, to “get to know the students” and create an atmosphere of “commitment” to the department (Professor Morrissey, Sociology, GCU). All members of staff are engaged in teaching at GCU. There are no ‘research only’ contracts. Members of staff are awarded research leave for short periods of time such as for example to take up a Research Fellowship but at all other times every member of staff is involved in teaching.

Table 6.1: Percentages of Staff Employed on Different Status Levels in Sociology Departments 1996/7

	Sociology GCU	Sociology RCU	All Social Studies in UK Universities
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Lecturers	40	57	46
Senior Lecturers Researchers	30	14	19
Professors	30	29	13
Researchers	0	0	16
Others	0	0	7
Total	100	100	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Almost all of the staff in the department have been there since the opening of the university, or not long after. Only one new appointment has been made in the last sixteen years.

The Sociology department at GCU is within the 18% of departments with ten staff or less. Of the members of staff in sociology at GCU 30% are Professors, 10% Reader, 20% Senior Lecturers and 30% are Lecturers. This is shown in Table 6.1.

The division of labour within the department is described as informal both in terms of teaching and administration. All members of staff teach and have administrative responsibilities that regularly rotate. So for example the role of head of department and Chair of the Subject Committee will rotate approximately every four years. However, there is evidence to the contrary where certain roles and responsibilities are becoming more fixed and formalised. For example, one member of staff has substantially more administrative duties than anyone else.

It is still informal in this department. The jobs get shared around. We used to circulate the jobs fairly regularly and we tend not to now like I have done undergraduate admissions for eight years because revolving heads of department know that if they try to pass that onto somebody they will either do it badly purposely, or you know...

(Mr Robertson, Sociology, GCU)

The division of labour within the department may not be wholly equal between members of staff but being a small department it is imperative that everyone is involved substantially in all three areas of teaching, administration and research. A heavier

administrative burden may fall on Mr Robertson but even he feels that it is a “responsible department” where “not everybody is dead friendly with each other but we work together and we work together as colleagues”. The relationship between members of staff in this department may be described as a ‘collegial’ culture with people working together on fairly equal terms.

The School of Social Sciences at RCU houses the department of Sociology. It has gone through a number of changes of title and organisation. There have been a number of staff changes since 1995. Three members of staff have arrived at the school since 1995 including the current head of School and Deputy head of School. In contrast to the Sociology department at GCU, there are significantly more part-time and more women members of staff. All of these factors have an important bearing on research activities. For example, staff at RCU are less ‘well-established’ in research than at GCU. Similarly, part-time lecturers have substantially less time to spend on research.

There is no formal organisation within the department and no head of department.

The central decision making is made at the School level. Budgets are handed down to schools and the direction of this is dealt with at School level. The deputy head of School, Dr Nicholas, is located within the department of sociology and he assumes authority in terms of important departmental decisions such as time-tabling and funding.

We have a school structure here that has got a federation of seven different departments, one of which is sociology. Em there are some departments with a management structure introduced with the more senior staff. Sociology, partly because of its values and partly because of its small size has always resisted the

view of having one person being a hierarchical person and we always invest in the Field Chair a lot of day to day power particularly for students. And also the other thing you might want to know which is the local fact that we have the deputy head who is a sociologist, Dr Nicholas and the most vexing hierarchical issue is funding and timetabling and Dr Nicholas last year agreed to do those for us. So in a way we can all talk about being collegial and equal and I think we are because we have this peculiar mechanism of having Dr Nicholas making those decisions.

(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

The collegial ideal is further supported by the claim that there is an informal organisation within the department in terms of teaching roles and other administrative duties.

I mean I am not moaning about it because we have this quite pleasant collegial system of sorting it out. Everybody knows what other people are doing, not by hours but by they are leading this module, they have got x numbers of students doing it. So you can tell at a glance, you can work out what they are doing in terms of hours. Eh but the philosophy here has always been don't interfere if you feel that it is reasonably and roughly equitable, it is all right.

(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

On the one hand, Professor McGowan claims that there is a team commitment and a certain amount of equity in terms of teaching and other duties. On the other hand, there are members of staff who maintain that these loads are unequal in their distribution. A division of labour is more apparent. The Subject Leader position, for example, is central to the administration of the teaching procedures and incurs a lot of administration. This position is a good example of organisational change within the department and a discernible shift from a flexible, collegial, rotation of duties to a more fixed allocation of duties. The Subject Leader position has been given to a member of staff who does not want to be included in the research assessment and is therefore willing to take on additional administrative duties. This position would have been rotated in the past and

had at one point been shared by members of staff. Currently, however one member of staff will hold it indefinitely.

RCU has a strong tradition of commitment to teaching and this is reflected both in the institutional and departmental literature. Historically, the institution was established with a mission of teaching as a priority. All staff are involved in teaching within the department and there are no 'research only' contracts. There are two members of staff who are part time with everyone else on full time contracts. The importance of research for the institutional mission of the university, however, is becoming more important. This is also reflected in Sociology's departmental strategy where "equal value is given to teaching and research" and "advanced undergraduate modules and postgraduate courses strongly reflect its research interests". There is not a large graduate population within this department. Plans are currently being executed to increase the numbers of postgraduate students. This is to be achieved by introducing new MA programmes and by attracting PhD students. The department is currently funding one PhD student.

The organisational, managerial and ideational structures of the department can be investigated further by looking in more detail at research activities and strategy and policy processes, particularly in relation to the RAE.

## Research Assessment, Research Policy and Research Activities in Sociology at GCU

Well I took over as head of department only twelve months before (the RAE Submission) and as far as I can tell there was no strategy leading up to it. I mean we more or less kind of found ourselves having to do the return without very much... There was a realisation that people needed to have publications but by that time it was almost too late to do very much about it. It would be wrong to say that we had any kind of real strategy leading up to it. I had a strategy in mind when I was writing the return and the only other things that we were trying to do that we were doing anyway was building up graduate numbers. What we tried to do was to show ourselves as a department that was on some sort of rising tide, you know that we were actually going somewhere. So it was an attempt to show that graduate numbers have increased which they have from a very low base. Em it really was too late, I mean to prepare for these exercises you need a strategy to start years before so it was very much a..., and in my own mind I see it very much as a somewhat cosmetic exercise, trying to put things together to present the department in the best image. It is a creative piece of copy writing is how I saw the exercise really. (Professor Davenport, HOD, Sociology, GCU)

In terms of research policy there seems to be widespread consensus within the department that, particularly with regard to the RAE, there is no special research strategy or organisation of research activities. The head of department, who was also one of the key authors of the RAE submission, claims that the main form of strategy was to write the submission in such a way as to present the department in the most positive way. This 'creative copy writing' earned the department a moderately high grade in the 1996 RAE.

In other words a way of presenting the department to make it more obvious that what we were doing were good things, like the scholarship and research thing. I mean one way of looking at that is to say this is a department with a poor research record, you know very few research funds and not a good research record. What I tried to do was present it in a different way and say well actually what it is, is a department with a strong scholarship record that feeds into the research. And that is what I meant by creative copy writing ... what I tried to do was to take features of the department and present them in such a way as to make them look as if, well as if they were policy decisions but as if they were actually advantageous. I identified research groups but I also said that we had a theory research group and a methods

research group in addition to substantive research and that this of course was a critical part of being a successful department both in terms of teaching and of research ... So we had these identifiable substantive research groups and also theory and methods groups. Em that was a strategic decision we took early on about how to present the department... So it was just...I presented it to other people as putting really the best light on the department possible without actually telling any lies. (Professor Davenport, HOD, Sociology, GCU))

The means by which the description of this submission identifies key principles of differentiation within sociological work in relation to scholarship and research, methodology and substantive research (Merton, 1970) will be discussed in more detail later in the Chapter. For the moment, however, it is important to uncover the specific decision-making processes with regard to research activities and the RAE submission.

The head of department was the key orchestrator of this submission although this was also discussed with the research committee. There are four members of staff on the research committee (all Professors and one Reader). The main concern of this committee is to build up the research profile of the department, organise conferences and coordinate research activities in preparation for the next RAE. Although the research committee is formally a subsidiary group to the Subject Committee, there is a feeling expressed that it is somewhat separate from it. As the Chair of the Subject Committee was quoted earlier as saying, the research committee “tends to be more independent of the Subject Committee than other sub-committees”. This would indicate, therefore, that the power of decision-making lies with a small number of people who are members of the research committee.

However, the decisions taken by the research committee are seen to guide the research activities within the department but there is no formal monitoring of staff activities or pressure put on them by the head of department. This can be shown both by the comments given by members of staff and by comments from the head of department and the research committee. As one senior lecturer explains:

Yeah I think there might have been information about the sorts of criteria which would be relevant. So I seem to remember dimly that you know the RAE before had included all one's publications or something and it was moving to a best four (publications) or some such and I think that we were informed about this change, so I suppose... Now I didn't feel it because I get four without, I mean four isn't a problem for me. If you are someone who isn't publishing regularly and four is a problem then in a sense hearing that it is four is rather like a suggestion or a nudge to em... you would interpret it as a nudge. I didn't because I already had the four on whatever so I never, I mean it didn't impinge in any particular way... Otherwise there was no kind of particular strategy.  
(Dr Leighton, Sociology, GCU)

There is no mechanism to compel people to do research but there are "little chats" and some "encouragement to publish". To a certain extent members of staff do not perceive any specific research policy within the department and do not feel any particular pressure with regard to the RAE. The 'managerial surveillance' (Harley and Lowe, 1998) of research activities is not reported in this department. However, most people within the department are research active and were entered in the RAE. The one person who was not included was given other duties (including a half time administrator post for the university) so that person did not count in the percentage of staff included.

There is evidence, however, that the head of department and other members of the research committee feel a sense of frustration with the lack of urgency shown by some



members of staff towards the research work and the research profile of the department.

For example, at the research committee they discussed what to do about the lack of applications made by staff for funding.

**1<sup>st</sup> Participant:** O.K... em and sorry I should have had any other business here, are you aware of applications (for funding) and stuff happening?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Participant:** No, well in the sense that no one has asked me to sign any so I can only assume that there aren't any which is bad news.

**1<sup>st</sup> Participant:** Yes, I mean Bob and I are developing two at the moment.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Participant:** Right, I have been pondering about how to deal with this and in a sense the logical thing to do is what we do anyway which is send something round asking people if they are thinking of putting in grant applications and have they done so and if so how many did they apply for, that sort of thing. I am reluctant in a sense to do it because you get half the replies and you wait six months for the other half and...

(Research Committee Meeting, Sociology, GCU)

The culture within the department, therefore, is one of individual autonomy where lecturers are left to decide on their personal research plans. As Professor Morrissey explains, it is not the "research committee's business to determine those things".

Members of staff are seen as being well established in their field and it is for them to decide on their research strategies. Suggestions are given in relation to publications and funding but it goes no further than that.

However, the university policy on research at GCU is for all departments to be awarded the top rating in the RAE. The head of department is realistic about the chances of this for the sociology department. He argues that not everyone in the department is necessarily capable of achieving the highest grade for their research activity and he reasons that the

assumption is wrongly made that continual improvement is always possible in the same way that standards in education are always expected to increase. Moreover, it is difficult to impress upon staff the implications of going for the highest grade.

But the other thing I found a bit distressing about it was that (members of staff) were thinking about it in terms of four publications and when I pointed out to them that they should be thinking about it in terms of four quality, high quality publications, not four publications, em they were sort of taken aback. In other words, they hadn't really accepted the fact that it isn't four publications it has to be four publications just to remain (at the same grading). If you want to get to a (higher grading) we are talking about high quality publications however this is assessed by the panel.

(Professor Davenport, HOD, Sociology, GCU)

Professor Davenport argues, therefore, that there is a long-term strategy for the department to work towards a higher grading but this is not expected by the next RAE in 2001. Most of the staff have been in the sociology department at GCU for a very long time, and their age profiles and experience ensure that their reputations as sociologists in particular research areas are noted. In terms of the research strategy and policy within the department, the emphasis is on the autonomy of individuals in directing their own work. In terms of the organisation of the department and decision-making there would seem to be little evidence of 'managerialism'. Although the department may not fit the description of 'pure collegiality' (Bush, 1998) in the instance of research policy, there is little central (managerial) direction. The common sense of purpose revolves mainly around teaching activities and decisions over research are left largely up to the individual so long as minimal requirements for RAE submission are met.

This attitude of independence and autonomy of research practice can be analysed in terms of firstly, the 'types of sociology' (Merton, 1970) which members of staff engage in and the organisation of these activities. Taking the idea of the lone scholar/research team split discussed by Merton (1970) the staff in this department all fit largely into the former category.

The sociological work done at GCU can be grouped into a number of areas. This is clear both from looking at the RAE submission for the department and from the interviews conducted with members of staff. The groupings indicate a common interest among members of staff but there is no formal organisation to these groupings. The head of department describes them as a kind of 'natural grouping' The department has a history of very individualised methods of doing research that is now beginning to change as research interests are being consolidated. The head of department argues that where individuals were appointed in the past on their teaching expertise (resulting in an expansion of areas of research) it is now considered important to appoint people to strengthen rather than expand research areas.

Although it would appear that individuals fall into 'natural groupings', this is not always evident in the way in which they work together. Many staff report little or no collaboration with other members of staff in the department.

So I have two research collaborations but they are not in this department...But no I talk to (member of staff) quite often about research work. We don't actually do anything together. We have talked about doing things together but there has always been other stuff.

(Professor Morrissey, Sociology, GCU)

The amount of external funding awarded to staff in this department is limited, although there has been awards from the research councils in excess of £20,000 per year. The lack of research funding is seen by many to be due to the type of research that is being done as well as to the argument that it is difficult to get outside funding for such a small department. Some members of staff actively pursue outside funds, and get some money; but others say that they do not try to secure this kind of funding.

Em very rarely, I have done recently with (member of staff), we made an application for an ESRC award which he may have told you about. It was turned down. So I rarely apply for money. There is a possibility of some kind of independent money for a small-scale project in the New Year but it is not through a research council or you know one of those grant-giving bodies. On the whole, again the difficulty is partly (research area). It is not the sort of field that attracts money, at least in this country.

(Dr Leighton, Sociology, GCU)

Only a small amount of department funding is available for research or for conference attendance (although larger grants can be applied for through the university pump priming initiative). One member of staff sees research funding as one of the most important determining factors in the research work he will carry out. Applying for this funding is therefore seen, as imperative but is hard to come by.

I can't even plan my own research activities in the sense that you apply for research grants and you get some and you don't get others. So I don't know what research I am going to be doing in a year's time because you know I have applied for ... So in the last two months I would have applied for four research grants, depending on

which of these will come off I will or will not be doing something... (Professor Morrissey, Sociology, GCU)

There are no research teams within the department that involves a large number of research staff. Dr Leighton has many postgraduate students and visiting scholars working with him and Professor Morrissey has one research fellow employed to work with him. The majority of staff in the department, however, work independently within the department whilst engaging in external collaborations.

The Sociology department at GCU can be summarised as being comprised of highly individualised researchers who can be broadly grouped into three research areas. The twin academic concerns of 'autonomy' and 'collegiality' are of primary importance to the staff in this department. This is evidenced by the reports on a) division of labour and b) decision-making, particularly on teaching and departmental matters.

### **Research Assessment, Research Policy and Research Activities in Sociology at RCU**

A research committee was set up in Sociology at RCU to plan for and write the submission for the RAE and has continued in existence, meeting once or twice per term. This kind of decision making process regarding research did not exist until relatively recently within the department.

Well in the past em perhaps also I was... no it wasn't so much of a you know we didn't have meetings to say right who's research active who isn't, who's going to

do this, who's going to do that, what about bidding for some funds to support that piece of research. That wasn't, three, four years ago that wouldn't have been part of you know, well certainly I didn't know about it. It wouldn't have been devolved to the field in the way those discussions are now, yeah.  
(Ms Chandler, Sociology, RCU)

Everyone in the department is involved in this committee and it makes decisions on how research funds will be spent. It also takes decisions on study leave and funds for conference attendance for members of staff. However, all of these decisions have to be approved by the head of School and must demonstrate a continuing relevance to the overall research strategy of the department.

In terms of participation in decision-making, however, the process is open to all members of staff and so in principle a form of collegial relations operate within the department although this is subject to further managerial direction at School level. In terms of the RAE submission there was also evidence of wider participation by members of staff in the drafting and redrafting of the various statements. As one member of staff explains:

Eh we went through a series of meetings basically which worked through a process of continually firming up a draft. Em I am thinking of the statements for RA5 and 6 which seemed a lot more at the time than simply getting people to state their publications. Em and essentially we asked everyone to write a paragraph about themselves, about their research interests and then I sort of stuck them together as a coherent statement divided into sort of RA5 and 6 and the differences between those which is basically RA 5 is what is going on, what are people doing and how does that relate to some kind of organisation of research. And RA6 is more how wonderful is everybody, tell us about their honours and achievements. Em and so basically we built up from the individual statements and then we said o.k have we got any clear clusters here because we weren't really a clustered department in that sense and one of the issues we had was so many new people coming in to a small department.  
(Dr Nicholas, Deputy head of School, Sociology, RCU)

The Sociology department at RCU is very small and part of the future research strategy is to try and increase the number of staff. Research plans also include providing a more focused set of sociological themes and focusing staff research interests into clusters. For the 1996 RAE the department was criticised for seeming too fragmented (according to the feedback given by one member of the RAE panel). More research students are being encouraged into the department, which is seen as a way of increasing and strengthening research activity.

Research funds, including Non Formula Funding (see Chapter One) has been given back to the department to help improve research activity. The funding from this RAE source is given to the head of School to decide how it will be distributed to departments. The money given to the sociology department has been used to extend posts, provide one PhD studentship and give study leave to members of staff.

Plans to provide a coherence and 'clustering' of staff in the department involves the setting up of a new research centre which consolidates the research interests of many of its members. The extending of part time posts for some members of staff is being used to invest time in getting the centre up and running.

...the point three (added to the post of point five) has been added to develop this research centre, to develop research and help develop the centre and create a series of seminars em nationally... and do more in the future, it might be conferences and other things that we would host here.  
(Dr Casey, Sociology, RCU)

The development of the centre is one means of increasing the research activity and profile of the department. Certain other policies are introduced to help improve the research profile, including forms of monitoring. Members of staff are encouraged to publish in the refereed journals and also to apply for external funding, but most members of staff do not feel that 'strong pressure' is put on them to do research or be involved in particular kinds of research activities. A questionnaire is distributed to all members of staff that asks about their publications, external grant applications and statements on personal strengths and weaknesses. This is seen as a form of monitoring of activities and as Dr Nicholas argues, "we can use that information to make judgements about supporting research". The emphasis is on encouraging everyone to work effectively for the good of the whole department.

...those (criteria) that have been formulated for the sociology department's research plans that have been developed as part of the School research strategy. So that is to work within these (research) clusters, ...and em to expect everybody to publish in good academic outlets. Just general encouragement to raise external research funding with no terribly strong pressure on that, it is more a kind of moral pressure. (Dr Nicholas, Deputy head of Department, Sociology, RCU)

It is certainly felt as a pressure by some members of staff in the department, particularly those who are on part time contracts and are expected to engage in research activities at an equivalent level to the full time members of staff. As Dr Casey argues, the part time members of staff are "paid half but expected to do the same as other people in terms of generating research". There is also a concern with the pressure to raise external funding for research that is felt by members of staff. Despite attempts to achieve this aim, it is difficult for some people, particularly where the research interests do not accord with



what is seen as research that is likely to be funded by research councils and other funding bodies.

I'm not an income generator...Some of my colleagues get decent money...but I just don't see myself doing that sort of work but I feel pressure, is it peer pressure? It is from above too I mean clearly the university says that too, we must increase our research income. So the priority is that department sets figures, not sociology, schools set figures and we have a figure that we have to reach and (deputy head of Department) keeps nudging.  
(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

At the department level, therefore, the perception of members of staff is that the department is organised along collegial lines with full participation of all members of staff. This congeniality operates within a rather more 'strong managerial' direction from the head of School and the Deputy head of School.

Bourdieu (1988) argues, however that 'decision-making is everywhere' (see Chapter Three) and so it is imperative to look beyond the decision making processes within institutions. Questions must be raised about the principles underlying these decisions, the key principles of differentiation of academic and research work.

### **Principles of Differentiation of Academic Work in Sociology**

Bourdieu (1988) makes the distinction between academic capital and scientific (or research) capital and posits them as being mutually exclusive in terms of their ability to grant status and power within academic institutions and the academic community. Time

spent in accumulating the necessary capital in one area, either teaching or research, implies a corresponding lack of time spent on accumulating the necessary capital in the other (see Chapter Three). The interview data from the sociology departments that I studied suggests that academics spend their time predominantly in particular areas of academic work. This results in a differential accumulation of capital.

In both of the departments studied there was one member of staff in each department who took on most of the administrative responsibilities, who considered their job to be primarily related to their teaching work and who did not want to be included in the RAE. They either chaired teaching committees within the university and/or took more responsibility for undergraduate and postgraduate students. There were other members of staff in both departments, primarily Professors and Senior Lecturers, who clearly had invested much time in pursuing their research interests and building up a large stock of research 'capital' and in many cases sought funds to buy themselves out of teaching within the department. Professor McGowan explains his position:

So you are asking me how much time and I am saying I would have guessed about ten years ago I was teaching typically fourteen or fifteen hours a week all told. I'd be surprised if I am doing eight or nine hours a week now... because I am being bought out. I am doing about seven hours a week and if I didn't have a part timer I'd be doing up there fifteen hours.

And what I have noticed, and it is not a dramatic thing, but in recent years more and more I have come to focus, the priority is doing the research... Basically if you are producing publications, terrific, even better if you are getting some money in.  
(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

There are no 'research only' staff in these Sociology departments although at GCU there is one Postdoctoral researcher. Everyone in principle has an equal teaching load in both

of the departments but those members of staff who are able to secure external funding can 'buy themselves out' of teaching.

Almost all staff interviewed in Sociology at RCU and GCU were keen too assume the identity of researcher as well as teacher. Only Mr Robertson at GCU and Mr Taylor at RCU has no interest in assuming this role but wanted only to be involved in teaching and administration. All other members of staff were doing research and would want to be considered 'research active'. Even the part-time lecturers at RCU who had limited available time for research were negotiating more time that would be spent primarily on research.

An important issue within Sociology is what kind of research are people involved in and indeed what does being a 'researcher' mean. As the evidence from Becher (1989) and others suggest, Sociology is far from a unified discipline. It is these divisions within research, therefore, that I will now address.

### **Principles of Differentiation of Research Work in Sociology**

It emerged from many of my interviews that the distinction between work carried out under the umbrella title of scholarship or perhaps theory and work which is empirical or applied is central to the definition of the kind of research work being done by individuals. There would also seem to be a specific value attached to both of these forms of research.

Typically 'pure' or theoretical work is accorded a higher value across academic disciplines, specifically within the sciences (Becher, 1989). However, the interview data collected from the sociology departments within this study would seem to indicate that applied, empirical investigation which attracts, or at least has the potential to attract outside funding is also becoming more highly valued, at least within institutions.

...I have noticed that the research emphasis here is not just simply the RAE, but of course that is a big factor and of course the RAE is publication above all else, but the other thing that has happened is the emphasis has been to generate funds and of course the way to generate funds is to projects that appeal to the ESRC, that sort of thing... why I am defensive about what constitutes research is because I clearly don't do research that is easily fundable and I clearly don't do fieldwork in the orthodox sense... I don't know if, I imagine there is still because somehow if you are not a researcher then you are just a teacher or something or somebody who just reads books and that's not quite the same. So I wanted the definition that doing research is original thinking and it seems to me that some of the best stuff in sociology comes like that.

(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

Interviewees at both GCU and RCU gave evidence of a struggle to endorse the primacy of the scholar, the generalist, the theorist. The importance of this for the Sociology department at GCU was demonstrated in the RAE submission, which showed that a majority of staff would be placed in the category of Scholarship (as opposed to 'research'). A claim was made for the value of this kind of research activity within Sociology.

...emphasise that the departments activities were a combination of scholarship and research and tried to make that a distinctive feature and strength of the department because the way the thing is all written up it rather presumes that academics do research, scholarship doesn't appear anywhere in the material or the discussions...it is a mistake because in the social sciences one of the strengths, in sociology, one of the strengths has always been that it bridges in a way the social sciences and the

humanities. That is very true of this department and always has been. So we made a point of putting that in the return, that we had people who were dedicated to scholarship in the department and people doing research in the department and tried to make that a distinctive feature.

(Professor Davenport, HOD, Sociology, GCU)

It would appear, therefore, from the perceptions of some staff at least that increasingly within sociology departments empirical work is becoming more highly valued especially where it attracts funding from outside bodies.

Somebody like (famous sociologist) who is an internationally renowned scholar, has had relatively few research grants but I mean the quality of what he has produced has been highly regarded. So that it you know, is get money. Instead of doing it on the cheap we have got to get money and do that kind of research that involves people like you rather than, if you like older fashioned forms of scholarship where people sit down and read books and do it themselves.

( Dr Leighton, Sociology, GCU)

However, the more traditional hierarchy that places theory and scholarship at the apex is still defended by certain sectors of the academic community within sociology. Although institutions need to secure research funding and for this reason it might appear that the accumulation of research capital has become more *material* than *symbolic* (Bourdieu, 1988). Therefore, the “alleged cleavage” within Sociology between theory and empirical research may give rise to different scales of evaluation where one is no longer dominant.

Thinking about definitions of scholarship and research within sociology represents one possible division amongst academics and the research they do. Using his categories of convergence and divergence to describe the commonality and diversity of sociologists,

Becher puts sociology firmly in the divergence category describing it as “fissiparous and fragmented” (Becher, 1989). This finding would seem to be supported in light of the discussion of scholarship and research along with the many and varied forms of sociology (different theorists, methodologies, research areas). However, when one looks specifically at research interests within departments there is evidence of a convergence of commonalities specifically with regard to research interests. At GCU there are three identifiable research groupings within which staff have common research interests. Likewise at RCU a new research centre has emerged to which over half the staff in the department are affiliated. The extent to which the research interests of staff really do converge and the extent of collaboration of staff within the same department is often smaller than the title of research group or centre would imply.

But as it turns out, it happens that there are people working in these identifiable groups, particularly in the (research area 1) and the (research area 2) where although they are groups with only two people, they are the ones that have most graduate students and postdocs. And then the rest is in a sense a much looser group, em part of the coherence comes from the fact that we offer this (particular post graduate course) and most of the other people teach on that course...Em but we realise that in a sense we have got to make a pitch for research coherence from the point of view of appealing to the research assessment exercise and also appealing to the university...we know that we have to specialise, we can't pretend to do everything and we have a fairly naturally...falling into these research groupings. (Professor Morrissey, Sociology, GCU)

There would appear to be a concern to establish areas of expertise within sociology departments which has meant that research groups have become quite apparent. This gives the impression of a greater convergence of research interests. When questions are posed as to what a research group or a research centre means effectively, in terms of practice, the idea of convergence is not quite as straightforward.

Yeah I mean by agreeing to disagree about more or less everything the staff get on pretty well. So (particular group of sociologists) think a lot of the other sociology is unsystematic and unpainstaking... they think are restrictively petty or something like that, there is that sort of thing. So it is not that we all agree what the future agenda for sociology is but that we recognise that all of us is probably pretty good at the thing that we do... (Professor Morrissey, Sociology, GCU)

In the Sociology department at RCU there is a new research 'centre' that a large percentage of staff are affiliated to and their research interests have converged on a particular research topic. They research and publish together, organise conferences and meetings and have regular contact. These criteria would to some extent fulfil the condition of a 'centre' outlined by Winsborough (1992). However, all members of staff continue to teach and so are not engaged solely in research. This kind of 'fracturing of the department' is therefore not so likely. However, the introduction of such centres within Sociology does have other important implication. Winsborough (1992) uses the term 'centrifugal' to indicate that research centres may "fracture the disciplinary core". One result of this, is the move towards centres of specialisation and a shift from 'GP Sociology'. Professor McGowan gives one example to illustrate this.

**Professor McGowan:** And to go back to the question of how does it fragment it clearly, some people in this (department)... are pursuing their research which is quite focused and specialised. They have to be very focused to do fieldwork that gets funded and that takes them away from general questions and it makes them, I think not very keen to come to the seminar as we had the other week... on the Origins of Sociology (by Professor from LSE). I mean it is fascinating stuff for Sociology...but if you are interested in a contemporary (empirical research) area... it doesn't appeal (...) And I do think the general question is, well I think of myself, I like that term, it's not mine its (Professor from another University) who calls himself a GP Sociologist. Did you ever see that article?

**Interviewer:** No

**Professor McGowan:** And I think that is partly because of teaching, teaching undergraduates and I think I have made a virtue of it but this notion of having a wide interest again doesn't quite fit with funded research where you have to focus right down."

(Professor McGowan, Sociology, RCU)

The Sociology departments at GCU and RCU are too small to be able to make any claims for the centrifugal/centripetal tension given by Winsborough (1992). However, the example of the research 'centre' at RCU does illustrate how these different practices may begin to operate within a Sociology department to further fragment an already divided discipline.

It is interesting, however, to compare the judgements here on the merits of different 'types of Sociology' and compare with the judgements made in the RAE. The full criteria used for Sociology in the 1996 RAE are given in Appendix 9.

It is emphasised in the RAE criteria that "most highly valued will be those works that contain significant or innovative research (whether theoretical or substantive)". This implies that no greater value will be placed on either theoretical or substantive/empirical work but will instead concentrate on the main indicators of the 'quality' of publications and a vibrant research 'culture'. The way in which these different indicators are understood and can be evidence in the Sociology departments will be further explored in the analysis of the academic and research trajectories of the staff at GCU and RCU.



## **Structural Positioning and the Construction of a Sociological ‘Habitus’: changing dispositions and practices**

The Sociology departments that have been studied at GCU and RCU are relatively small with less than twelve members of staff, compared to other sociology departments nationally. One third of all Sociology departments have twenty or more staff. The experience and positioning of staff within them, therefore, may not reflect that of staff located in much larger departments. Smaller departments allow for different forms of interaction and cultural construction than would be possible in much larger departments. However, the changing structural influences surrounding academic departments are similar for these sociologists.

Much of the discussion in the previous sections has drawn on the perceptions and experiences of the academic staff. All of these individuals are located in specific positions within these departments and their practices and ‘points of view’ reflect these situations. This section, therefore, will seek to explore the sociological ‘habitus’ of a selection of staff interviewed in this study in order to analyse the ‘practical sense’ or ‘feel for the game’ that orients the actions of these sociologists.

There were five members of staff interviewed at GCU, two Professors and four Senior Lecturers. At RCU there were six interviewees, one Professor, one Senior Lecturer and four Lecturers. The table in Appendix 10 provides some descriptive detail on these members of staff. At GCU only Mr Robertson was not put forward for submission in the

RAE and therefore classified as research inactive. In comparison three of the staff interviewed at RCU, Dr Casey, Ms Chandler and Mr Taylor, were not submitted. Unlike the Biologists discussed in the previous chapter, there is no apparent link between the length of time at an institution (or in one's career) and the classification of research active or research inactive. Mr Robertson at GCU and Mr Taylor at RCU have been at those institutions since the 1970s. Ms Chandler and Dr Jensen both at RCU, on the other hand, are towards the beginning of their career and have more recently joined the department.

There is less of a division of labour between research and teaching for staff in Sociology compared to those in Biology since all staff do both and there are no 'research only' staff such as Research Professors or Research Fellows as there were in the Biology departments (although there is one recently appointed Research Fellow working with Professor Morrissey). The classification of research active or research inactive is important for an understanding of the sociological *habitus* of these academics and their *dispositions* and *practices*. Struggles for the accumulation of research capital and particularly the classification of being research active is a central feature of the practice of most of these individuals. Others are struggling to re-define what research active means or to widen the categories of academic judgement away from purely research activities. The individual 'cases' of Sociologists will be discussed to best illustrate the variety of *positions* and *position taking* within these departments.

## **Sociology Staff Classified as Research Active**

### *Professor Morrissey (GCU)*

Professor Morrissey has been in the department since 1995. He has taken on a number of commitments that relate to both teaching and research, including Chair of the Research Committee and Chair of Graduate Studies. He is therefore involved extensively in the research plans and policies of the department and in the RAE submission. He has built up a strong research trajectory within his academic career moving between institutions and research specialisms. He spends a lot of time in accumulation of *research capital*, including national and international collaborations, attending research networks and small (more specialised) conferences (social capital). He is keen to receive research funding (material capital) and is applying for many research grants (currently four in preparation). Research funding is used primarily to employ research staff. Professor Morrissey is the only person in the department to employ a Research Fellow to work on his research project. Other members of staff have used such research money to 'buy themselves out' of teaching and free up their time to do more research. Professor Morrissey concentrates on the former strategy although he acknowledges that when it is necessary to write up major research projects then he may need to 'drop out' of teaching. This is not always the best option but is seen as the 'lesser of two evils'.

Professor Morrissey reports a high teaching load (approximately thirteen and a half hours per week 'on paper') because his courses are popular. He feels under tremendous

pressure and describes his basic position as “frantic firefighting” between the different demands on his time. Given his commitment to teaching, he also has an established accumulation of academic capital in his close involvement in teaching and in teaching committees such as the graduate committee.

Professor Morrissey is intensely passionate, however, about his research work and the convergence of his interests and ‘expression of social being’ or *sociological being*. He maintains; “well I have got a position (in research debates) and it is a shame not to have that position represented. I mean it is because I believe in this position that I want it to be out there”. From his own perspective in his research field he is also concerned about the possible clash of values between what is demanded by RAE criteria and what he feels to be the important achievements of his work or ways of reaching his intended audience. This kind of dilemma is faced over publications choices. For example, should he publish in a handbook of research in his area (not highly rated for RAE purposes) or publications in refereed journals such as the British Journal of Sociology (which are highly rated for RAE purposes)?

Yeah there is a clash partly in terms of, two things, there is a clash in terms of RAE and so on because it is fairly clear what counts as reputable in terms of the RAE are books with recognised publishers or articles in the top mainstream journals. Whereas writing chapters for you know a book in Lisbon is more or less insignificant... But it maybe that I am altogether wrong about these other things that I am doing, maybe I am stupid to be doing the handbook and what I ought to be doing not just for the RAE but for the sake of...maybe people really do just go and read BJS (British Journal of Sociology) or Sociological Review and if it is in there then it has more of an impact than being in the International handbook. I kind of think not but I don’t have the time or necessarily the inclination to try to work out a precise answer to that...So at my interview I was asked this kind of question by the Professor of Psychology who said to me, do you know what your next RAE

publication is going to be and I said well yes I do but I don't want to live my whole life as though that were the only thing that you are answerable to. Because there are things that I believe about the way sociology of (research area) should be done and there are people who I believe do (this kind of) sociology very badly and I want to stop them dominating the market. So I am more concerned, in some ways I ought to be more concerned to stop them dominating the market than for us to do well in the RAE. Although I know if we don't do well in the RAE I am not going to have time to do any research anyway so they will dominate the market in any rate. So...

Professor Morrissey's interests are focused on research capital accumulation both institutionally (through the RAE) and disciplinary (through his research specialism). He struggles, therefore, to achieve recognition across these multiple levels of evaluation.

As well as conflicts over what counts as 'valuable' forms of publications within Sociology, the RAE also offers a definition of research and terms of criteria or definitions of research which may not coincide with other scales of evaluation of academic work such as scholarship and original thought (rather than original research). This, at least, is the perception of the next sociologist.

*Professor McGowan (RCU)*

Professor McGowan has been at RCU for over twenty years and in that time has built up a reputation within Sociology both by holding positions of importance within Sociological societies, for example, as Chair of the British Sociological Society (BSA) and in terms of his publication record. He maintains that he has little difficulty in attracting publishers for his work and on the contrary is often invited to write books. For example, he says that in the last few years he has "had several approaches from

publishers”. However, he is concerned that his kind of sociological research does not easily attract external funding and he says “I clearly don’t do research that is easily fundable and I clearly don’t do fieldwork in the orthodox sense”.

Professor McGowan describes a term borrowed from another sociologist of a “GP Sociologist”, a general practitioner, one who serves to integrate and pull together the different strands of the discipline. He contrasts this with the specialist, the kind of Sociologist who is expert in one particular research area but knows little of wider sociological themes and areas of study. He places himself squarely within the former category. He worries, however, that the value of sociological work is being put more on the later. Professor McGowan would position himself within the integrative, GP position within the sociological map.

Professor McGowan also argues in favour of ‘original thinking’ in contrast to the definition of ‘original research’ used within the RAE process. He gives examples of individual sociologists who would be placed within this category such as Anthony Giddens (LSE) and Krishan Kumar (University of Kent). This form of differentiation can be compared to the distinction made by Bourdieu between *intellectual* and *research* capital. It fits also with the idea of an *integrative* approach to research or scholarship.

A further differentiation can be made between *theory* and *empirical research* (see also Merton, 1970) and *disciplinary* and *problem based research* (see also Gibbons et al, 1994). Professor McGowan argues that the empirical, problem based research is

becoming more valued within Sociology because of the ability to attract research funding, particularly from research councils.

Professor McGowan, therefore, has spent time accumulating what could be described as 'intellectual capital' rather than research capital. His sociological reputation is based primarily on accumulation of symbolic capital (publications – books and journal articles) and social capital (collaborations with members of staff within the institution but in different departments and collaborations outside of the institution). He is also concerned to improve international collaborations with institutions in Canada and the United States. This struggle to achieve international links and an international reputation is in direct response to RAE criteria of research success.

Professor McGowan's major concern, however, is the difficulty of attracting research funding for his type of research work. Where he has been successful in small grant applications he has used the money primarily to buy himself out of teaching in order to have time to write books.

The difficulty of attracting research funding, however, is not reserved for more theoretically oriented sociologists but also affect more empirically oriented researchers as the next sociologist illustrates.

*Dr Leighton (GCU)*

Dr Leighton is a Senior Lecturer in the department at GCU and has been a member of staff for over twenty five years. A large part of his time is spent working with postgraduate students (approximately thirteen to fifteen hours per week) in comparison with the time he spends with undergraduates (approximately seven hours per week). He also supervises an “erratic number” of visiting overseas students. His supervision of these students is related to his research area but the heavy involvement of time required means that he has less time for his own research work and particularly the writing up of his research for publication. His research area is empirically based and therefore is very time consuming in the production of the work in terms of collecting and analysing data. There is no time for research during term, as he puts it “term time is zilch” and not enough time in vacations.

He has a reputation within his field of research and for this reason most of his writing happens in response to prompts and invitations. However, writing is often held up by lack of time to complete it. He uses the analogy of a ‘camel’ to explain how pieces of work can be carried around for a long time before there is finally time to finish writing.

I have submitted two journal articles. One of which is based on work that I did in 1989 to 91. It was oldish work and I wrote up a draft in about 91 and it took me until sometime to get that finished off. And that has just been published. Another paper was this one that I mentioned that I almost completed the draft in about 94... term began and I didn't have time to finish it and came back to it in September last year.



Dr Leighton reports no well-defined strategy for the presentation of his research work given that many of his publications are in response to invitations to write books or chapters for edited collections. However, he is concerned with the 'quality' of journals and implies a certain correspondence between the 'emotional investment' contained in a piece of work and his interest in placing it in a 'quality' journal.

I have been pleased about getting a particular paper in (a journal) because it is a journal that I have long wanted to have something to send them. And I think that with work that I really care about there are certain journals that I would like to get things into. But I wouldn't otherwise have a regular place (to publish).

Dr Leighton's work is interdisciplinary so he maintains collaboration with another department in the university. The main interest in his work is in the U.S. and so he has many collaborations with colleagues in the US. His *social capital*, therefore, is primarily with international colleagues and members of staff from other departments outside of Sociology.

His focus is on the accumulation of research capital rather than academic capital. His interests are working closely with postgraduate students on the 'production' of his research work. His reputation in the field and his publications also ensure possession of *symbolic capital*. However, he is unable to secure much research funding for his work. Given that his research area is not directly applied, he argues, that is difficult to receive funding from the research council (ESRC). One application he has made was turned down. A shortage of *material capital* means that he is unable to spend much time

pursuing international collaborations or taking time off from teaching to engage in the production and presentation of his research work.

For some members of staff , however, the accumulation of research capital is of secondary interest to them as teaching and administration, or the accumulation of *academic capital* is their priority.

### **Sociology Staff Classified as Non Research Active**

#### *Mr Robertson (GCU)*

Mr Robertson is a lecturer who has been in the department for more than twenty five years. He was the only member of staff not to be returned in the 1996 RAE and he feels that it is “like a confession” to say that he “hadn’t published coming up to the RAE”. As a “tactical move” he was given a position of 60% teaching within the department and 40% working in central administration. He has a lot of enthusiasm for teaching. “I love teaching, I love contact with students and I don’t mind administration, you know as long as it is productive administration”. He believes that the RAE, however, has made research the “be all and end all” of academic life at the expense of what he sees as the historical commitment to the teaching tradition of the institution.

I have been in the game thirty years and I can see a shift em you know in terms of the priority given to teaching and I think that is a very regrettable move because it

allows some people basically to get out of those responsibilities and write what I would consider to be academic self serving articles. That is they write articles for, you know, twenty or thirty other academics to read somewhere else in the world which is...it has made us more inward, writing for these particular journals rather than addressing public issues. But I wouldn't say everything in the RAE is bad. I am just getting my chance to moan in early because academics do moan.

Although Mr Robertson enjoys his job, therefore, he feels that he does have much to moan about. His position reflects many lecturers in university departments who now feel undervalued and “relatively deprived” not only in terms of income but also in terms of the symbolic value of their efforts. His main areas of interest are broadly an accumulation of academic capital, in the reproduction of the academic field in terms of teaching and the recruitment of postgraduate students to the university. The latter task he believes is perceived to be a ‘punishment post’ within the academic field.

The official thing is you have got to be as it were outstanding in two areas, administration and teaching or research. I mean I have been a lecturer now here since 1975 and I have never applied for a promotion and one of the reasons is because I know enough about it to know I wouldn't get it. And I am not going to put myself in the position of ...every year asking for it you know and possibly getting disappointed. So you know and feeling relatively deprived. I would sooner just get on with what I am doing...because I know a lot of people, who have been quite affected by not getting promoted, hard done by and I can't... You know this is what you have chosen to do. The one thing that is different now is the amount of time it takes your graduates to overtake you in terms of income. I mean I keep meeting these people who graduated about five years ago who are earning ten thousand pounds a year more than I am earning, bloody hell you know, who is going to become an academic.

The position of staff who are mainly involved in teaching can be seen to be doubly undermined as the decline of status and income generally for academics (Halsey, 1992) is accompanied by a lack of recognition for efforts in teaching and research. It is not so

much that institutions and departments do not recognise the importance of these activities but that it remains a compensatory activity in comparison for the *symbolic capital* achieved through research (Bourdieu, 1988). This is true even in departments where staff feel that teaching in particular is a valued activity. Lack of possession of *research capital* is seen as detrimental to the interests of the department.

*Mr Taylor (RCU)*

Mr Taylor describes himself as an 'old timer' having been at RCU for over twenty years. He has been Subject Chair in the department four times and has recently been given this position on a permanent basis. It takes up a lot of his working time since as he explains, a student cannot change a course without his signature. He also teaches for about approximately 10-14 hours per week. He believes that the important thing in the context of RCU is a "commitment to teaching". He argues that "the old university idea of a lecturer being there to do research and a little bit of teaching on the side...will not actually meet the needs of the sorts of (students) that (are) coming in now." He also feels that he is often picking up the supporting side of the teaching role when other members of staff are unavailable. One example he gives is of a student who "had never actually been able to get to their personal tutor because the personal tutor was never in... so I switched over as personal tutor and dealt with it."

Mr Taylor would once have classified himself as a researcher but now, particularly in relation to RAE criteria, he does not want to be classified as research active. He has no

interest in accumulating the forms of research capital that are valued for the RAE such as publications and research funding. He passed over all of his PhD students to other members of staff. He feels that it is “not about research, it is about publication” and although he does research he doesn’t publish. And in terms of RAE criteria he believes that the *symbolic* value of publications is what counts.

To be here (in the department) is not work, work is to get published even if hardly anybody ever reads them. The little CV’able items. Teaching and student care, those things are not CV’able. They are not part of the department’s achievements and it is the classical thing that you find in any institution, it is the observable things that actually become part of the records of the institution that become important. All the literature on hospitals, any sort of institutions em bear that out, that tendency. The things that can’t be seen or counted are ignored. Now I tell everybody I think this is a smashing place. I think that those things are tendencies, they are external tendencies and there are responses to them. All the staff that I know are really conscientious and they will ... they are student centred, they will work on behalf of students... But what they experience is a putting away the fact that this is unproductive, it is not valid. Things that are valid are the things that appear in the departmental reports as publications. (Mr Taylor, Sociology, RCU)

Other members of staff in these departments, particularly those joining the department more recently and who are at the beginning stages of an academic career recognise the importance of *research capital* for achieving status within the institution. These people, such as Dr Jensen and Ms Chandler are concerned therefore to maximise their strategies to develop their research interests.

*Ms Chandler (RCU)*

Ms Chandler has been in the Sociology department at RCU for five years and is employed as a part-time lecturer. She is just completing a PhD at another university

where she also does some teaching. Her official teaching load takes up the whole of her half time post.

I lead a module with 200 students this term as a half timer and another module much smaller but basically I am fully committed, you know half of my week is spent teaching tutorials, preparing, whatever. So the research is something that goes on in my unpaid time em and I regard the PhD as mine...as my treat to myself in some way but the department will ultimately benefit from it.

Despite the fact that such a large proportion of her time is spent on teaching, Ms Chandler is keen to develop her research interests and particularly to increase her acquisition of forms of *research capital*. She was not submitted in the 1996 RAE but is determined to be included in the next one. She maintains that “we are encouraged to be research active and I definitely want to continue to be. I would hate to be just teaching”. She is quite explicit on her research strategy, therefore, which is directly aimed at RAE submission. Her primary goal is to have four publications and so she is working towards this, helped by some internal funding to ‘buy more writing time’.

Em basically I definitely want to go into the next research assessment exercise...whenever that might be. I was named as a researcher in the last one but not with enough, sufficient papers. So I am working very much towards having four papers for the next exercise whenever that might be. Em and already I have a chapter in a book and I have a paper that is with (a journal) at the moment... Em and I have funds from a QR fund... to help me write a paper. Basically it is sort of buying me in to write another paper but that paper, all of my publications are linked to my PhD. So I am being very instrumental in publishing as I go along which I believe is common practice now. But I certainly aim to have four publications for the next RAE.

Since Ms Chandler is at the early stages in her career, inclusion in the RAE submission has become an important marker of her status as a researcher. Her accumulation of *social*

*capital* has included attendance at conferences and workshops where research links have been made. Her research is part of the departmental research centre and this also involves collaborations with other members of staff in the centre.

The ways in which all of the individual sociologists discussed are enmeshed within the structural locations of disciplines and institutions ensures that they have unique positions and trajectories which gives them particular strategies and interests. The balance of activities and the economy of time spent on research and teaching is different for all members of staff. Although in both departments all members of staff reportedly have similar teaching and administrative loads, with the exception of Mr Robertson and Mr Taylor who have additional administrative duties.

The importance of research is attested to by all of these Sociologists but for each this can have various interpretations and the differential practices and activities supports this, including the effort put into applying for research funding and trying to publish in 'particular' journals. All have their own strategies and interests that result in a variety of research practices. And there are those members of staff who have no interest in research at all. Staff are classified as either research active or research non active for RAE purposes. The divisions along which this judgement is made, however, are different to those discussed in the previous chapter on Biologists firstly because of differences in disciplinary criteria of research excellence and secondly, because of strategies for the attainment of particular grades. For example, the criteria of 'internationally excellent' was less relevant for these sociology departments since they were not aiming for the top

RAE gradings. Decisions over classifications of research active and research non active staff, therefore, in these departments was more centred on the number and 'quality' of research publications.

These sociologists, therefore, are enmeshed within particular institutional and disciplinary structures that lay the conditions of possibility of their academic and research practice and provide the context for the expression of their *sociological habitus*. The organisational, managerial and ideational features of these departments were analysed to reveal commonalities and differences. Whilst the disciplinary structures of the *sociology field* span both departments.

The commonalities in organisation between these departments include the equitable division of labour in terms of teaching and research loads and the participation of staff in decision-making processes. These conditions fulfil the main criteria of collegial organisation (Bush, 1998). Although this representation of departmental life is not so straightforward as some members of staff have greater administrative duties, Mr Taylor and Mr Robertson. Furthermore, at GCU the decision-making on RAE and participation in research committee is not open to the whole department. However, certain cultural features of the department can be identified which are in contradistinction to the ascribed increase in managerialism and monitoring within university departments. The concern that bureaucratic organisation of research activities is replacing the more individual, artisan autonomy of research efforts (Merton, 1970; Abbott, 1999) is not substantiated within these departments. Although the necessity of increasing research activity has



resulted in certain forms of monitoring at RCU, the autonomy of individuals to determine their own research strategies is upheld at GCU. This was shown, for example, by the insistence that it is not the place of research committee to attempt to direct research strategies and interests of staff.

The fact that the sociology department at GCU is small, however, and the staff have reputations in their respective research areas makes this 'light touch' approach possible. Despite the autonomy and individual nature of the research strategies and interests of staff at GCU, however, there is a move towards concentration of research effort into particular areas of specialism. This may be in response to the necessity of producing a good narrative for the RAE submission in terms of research coherence (as Professor Davenport maintains) but the centrifugal tendencies (Winsborough, 1992) of research organisation are increasing. This is particularly apparent at RCU where members of staff are organised into a research 'centre'.

Winsborough (1992) argues that the break up of staff into centres results in a 'fracturing of the disciplinary core' (p.30). However, at RCU the centre is not research only since all members of staff also teach. The centre designates a concentration of *research* interests. This development is perceived by those members of staff such as Professor McGowan as a fracturing of the more generalist or integrative aspects of sociological work in areas of research specialisms. This tendency is endemic to disciplinary development (Becher, 1989) although evidence from these departments would indicate that strategies both of departments and individuals in response to RAE criteria are accentuating this process.

Becher (1989) argues that within the dichotomies of pure/applied, hard/soft and convergent/divergent, the former tend to be more highly valued. Within sociology further dichotomies can be added such as theory/research, generalist/specialist and original thinking/original research. The former all correspond to what is termed *intellectual capital* (Bourdieu, 1988) and would tend to be more highly valued. However, the RAE criteria, on the whole is perceived to value the latter which can be termed *research capital*. Research capital in RAE contexts also implies, publications (symbolic), research funding (material) and national/international reputation (social).

Individual sociologists have developed strategies and interests consistent with these demands for research capital but this is only where these strategies are consistent with their position both within the academic and the research field and the trajectory of their particular sociological habitus.

In this Chapter I have highlighted the particular investments made by Sociologists in their work. In the next Chapter, I will discuss academics in the English department before attempting to draw some conclusions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### English Narratives: an Investigation Of Two English Departments

The writer occupies a position in the space described: he knows it and he knows that his reader knows it. He knows that the latter will tend to relate the constructed vision he offers to the position he occupies in the field, and to reduce it to the viewpoint like any other; he knows that he will see in the slightest nuances of the writing - a *but*, a *perhaps* or, simply, the tense of a verb - indices of bias; he knows that he is likely to notice, amid all the efforts expended to produce a neutral language stripped of all personal resonance, only the effects of greyness, judging that is a high price to pay for what is, after all, never more than a form of autobiography. (Bourdieu, 1988: 25)

Several Shakespeare plays are parables of universities. The opening of King Lear is based on the aftermath of the meeting to review the portfolios of pro vice chancellors; Othello shows what can happen without an equal opportunities policy and a good appeal procedure for internal disciplinary matters. Marlowe's Duchess of Malfi, in yearning 'to spend two days with the dead', obviously had fond memories of the joint senate/council residential retreat. (McNay, 1996: 120)

The ethnographer draws on and elicits narratives as 'data' and recasts them in the sociological or anthropological narratives of scholarly writing. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996: 249)

The study of English Literature and Language emerged out of the retreat of the Classics and the birth of Philology. The sequence of development in English Studies can be given as Classics, Philology, 'Cambridge English', 'New Criticism', Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Cultural Studies (Evans, 1993).

Evans (1993) posits a tension between two schools of thought, one beginning in the 1920s and the other in the 1970s. The first is the Leavisite school of English. Also referred to as 'Cambridge English', the Leavisite view can be summarised as a concern to establish the importance of the 'great' literary works and make them fundamental to the study of English, to portray English as a serious discipline of study rather than a frivolous, amateurish activity and further to place English at the centre of human life, 'The belief was that studying English would make people more moral and would enable them to lead better lives amid the pressures of the modern world. English was redemptive.' (Evans, 1993: 131). The Leavisite position can be seen as a key development in the professionalization of the discipline ( a process started, according to Evans (1993) by Philology in its break from the classics) for it to be accepted as a legitimate and important area of study, critical to an understanding of human existence and providing a guiding moral force.

A specific technique which emerged at this time to challenge 'practical criticism' was the idea of 'close reading'. This implied a privileging of the text, it was aimed at providing both 'an objective statement about the text and about the subjective response' (Evans, 1993). Some followers of Leavis, however, missed the more experimental aspect of this technique, the objective, and incorporated it once more into the dominant discourse of 'sensitivity'. A close reading became an exercise in 'sensitivity-seeking';

The 'theorists' who came to prominence in the 1970s were vehemently in opposition to all reference to a 'sensitive' disposition. They attacked the moral and social elitism that

perpetuated the study of English as an intuitive discipline. They were radicals from the grammar school system who wanted to challenge the establishment and redefine the terms by which English is studied. Terry Eagleton was a founding spokesperson on the 'theorists' position.

Most universities offer an area of study for 'English' but there are a number of variations as to what these particular departments may be called. Some universities have a department of English, others have English Studies, some have the more inclusive titles of English and Related Literature, whilst others make the distinction between English Language and English Literature. These different names given to the area of study which is English, point to the complex history of the discipline and the particular specialisms or interests within individual university departments.

The evidence presented by Evans (1993) shows English studies to be a discipline with a multitude of cleavages and points of division. This is also attested to by the different names given to English studies departments. In many of the 'new' universities and some of the 'old' universities there is now a growing concern with English studies and its relationship to cultural studies. Also the importance of multiculturalism within English studies has questioned the exclusive study of 'English' literature. Many universities have English Language and Related Literature, which broadens the scope to include other non-English literature, this is the case at GCU. Within the English department at RCU there is an interest in cultural studies and multiculturalism. As Dr Millen argues, at RCU the emphasis is on English *studies* "because it is English from a broad cultural perspective".

The disciplinary organisation of English, therefore, contains multiple divisions and processes of construction. These also have a strong influence on the organisation and ideational structures within university departments, which will now be discussed.

### **Organisational, Managerial and Ideational Structures within the English Departments**

The English department at GCU has more than twenty members of staff making it relatively large compared with other institutions. Approximately 70% of English departments in universities across the UK have less than 20 members of staff and 23% have between 20 and 30 members, and 11% with more than 30 staff. At the time of my fieldwork there were 33% of staff were Professors, 7% were Readers, 33% Senior Lecturers and 27% Lecturers, shown in Table 7.1. All of these individuals are employed to do both teaching and research, with no ‘research only’ or ‘teaching only’ contracts in this department.

As with the other departments discussed at GCU, the key administrative positions within the English department are the head of department and the Chair of the Subject Committee. Unusually there is also a deputy head of department. This role was created in order to pass on some of the duties of the head and to cope with, as the head describes it, “the increased workload” in a department that is “under provided for in terms of

secretarial help and administrative help”. The deputy head’s responsibilities include, secretarial staff, the staff-student forum and the distribution of workloads such as teaching hours.

Table 7.1: Percentages of Staff Employed on Different Status Levels in English Departments 1996/7

	English GCU	English RCU	All Humanities Departments in the UK
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Lecturers	33	30	48
Senior Lecturers	40	70	21
Researchers			
Professors	27	0	12
Researchers	0	0	11
Others	0	0	8
Total	30	100	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, 1996/7

The head of department, Professor Hadfield, is described by one member of staff as the ‘foreign secretary’ working in conjunction with the Chair of the Subject Committee, the ‘home secretary’. The head crosses the divide between central administration and the department (‘them’ and ‘us’ as one member of staff referred to this division). In his capacity as ‘foreign secretary’, Professor Hadfield explains the benefits of the organisation structure at GCU.

**Professor Hadfield:** One thing about Golden County University is that it doesn't have a faculty structure and so heads of Department negotiate directly with the centre. So we are in touch with the Vice Chancellor on a regular basis. This is one of the good things about Golden County that em it is probably a sixties idea, y'know you haven't got a faculty, you have got departments that negotiate directly with the centre. But it is really good because it means that you can be reactive very, very quickly and you don't have to have your ideas go through several committees before they get up to where the real power lies.

**Interviewer:** So you exercise quite a lot of control then? The ideas that you might generate in terms of putting them into practice?

**Professor Hadfield:** Yes, yes in a sense obviously when it comes to things like negotiations of replacement of staff, then I can directly negotiate because my colleagues want as many other colleagues as possible and I go ahead and talk to the vice chancellor about that and make a case in terms of financial arguments, supporting teaching cover and things like that...

Professor Hadfield emphasises, however, that the English department at GCU is a very "consultative place". In the formation of policy and in decision-making within the department he locates himself firmly as a member of a team working for the common good. In his negotiations with central administration, therefore, he insists that "they (members of staff in the department) are usually very much with me... rather than with me acting on my own". Consultation takes place directly with colleagues or through the Subject Committee. Sub-committee meetings are also scheduled where necessary to discuss particular issues. Professor Hadfield maintains that he consults with the Subject Committee on everything although certain issues remain his sole responsibility, within this he includes finances, promotion and discipline. The head of department role has recently been made a rotating position, to be taken up on a three year basis. The previous headship had lasted for over fifteen years. According to Professor Hadfield, names are



put forward by the department and then heads are appointed by the Vice Chancellor and as he describes, “I got caught, you might say”.

The Chair of the Subject Committee at the time of my fieldwork was Mrs Jefferies. She had taken over the role only for one year to replace a Professor who had taken early retirement. The name of ‘home secretary’ is apt for how she describes her duties which involve primarily student and teaching matters within the department. She is surprised by the amount of time involved in dealing with individual students. She is involved in chairing the Subject Committee meetings.

All members of the staff talked about the ‘collegiality’ of the English department from the head of department to the recently joined lecturing staff. Everyone attested to the important role played by the Subject Committee in creating this environment. The deputy head of department Dr Ballard, maintains that because of the lack of a faculty structure, collegiality still exists within the department. Decision-making is perceived to be contained within the department, with no greater power between the department and central administration, and to involve the participation of all members of staff. The participation of all staff in the Subject Committee fulfils the criteria of an equal and democratic organisation associated with ‘pure collegiality’ (Bush, 1998). Mr Edmunds for example, believes that the department is a “very friendly, very transparent consultative place and it operates on democratic principles”. However he does see a change in the way in which Subject Committee meetings operate.

The broad lines are stable but the small and medium size details has altered quite out of recognition because the amount of business that has to be transacted by the Subject Committee is now so enormous that you simply have to have things organised very rigorously in order to get through it. And meetings that used to be fairly relaxed and had occasion for loose and free discussion, you can't do that because we'd never get through the business. So it is usually sub committee reports which are noted and passed and discussion usually only takes place on major issues that have been prepared by papers in advance. And the chair even then has to direct discussion very closely just to get through the agenda before people start to go home.

(Mr Edmunds, English, GCU)

Further conditions of collegiality include an 'assumption of a common set of values'

(Bush, 1998) and equal status for all members of staff (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998).

Within the English department at GCU there is a strong belief in equality of status for members of staff, particularly in relation to the division of labour. Professor Hadfield is very clear about the principles of equal division of labour.

Here we don't have research chairs as such, we do not have a privileged few people who just do research and no teaching because I think that is quite wrong. I personally couldn't go along with that. It does happen elsewhere. In some other departments I know they are very keen to bring in key players, give them some kind of fancy deals as well as good salaries also very small amounts of teaching. That doesn't happen here. All my colleagues have got the same kind of workloads em provision, a certain number of hours that they all teach and that is true of the most, sorry that is equally true of the most junior lecturer as it is of the most senior professor.

(Professor Hadfield, head of Department, English, GCU)

There is a consensus within the department that teaching and administration loads are equal and that the allocation of teaching is done openly.

Here we operate with teaching on a termly basis as opposed to an annual basis and basically at one of the Subject Committee in each term we have the workload documentation which shows the hours of teaching that everybody has done in the

previous term. And then we have a teaching allocation for the next term in relation to that and everyone's name is on it from the most senior professor through to the most, as it were, freshly appointed lecturer and people can see exactly how the hours work out. And the allocation of the next term is worked out on the basis of what you have done rather than who you are. This is a public document. We all have a copy of that and everyone can see exactly where people are placed. The only problem that ever arises, arises because some people have got a lot of graduate students and therefore, if they put long hours into graduate students then the issue is ought they to be having the same amount of em undergraduate teaching and obviously we do try to compensate a bit. However, this is not compensation by rank because even if a young person can have a lot of graduate students and have the credit for that just as equally can somebody who is a senior professor. So it is done you know in terms of the hours one has put in rather than where one is in the pecking order.

(Professor Hadfield, head of Department, English, GCU)

This practice is seen to enhance collegiality within the department. Despite the pressures which are seen to be generated from outside the department from the central administration of the university and accountability measures such as the RAE and Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA), the English department is commonly perceived to be "friendly, consultative and democratic".

The English department at RCU is part of a Faculty of Humanities and so the organisation is more integrated with other departments than is the case at GCU. It is a small department compared to other English departments across the university sector. It falls into the category of the 20% of departments that have ten members of staff or less.

As discussed with other departments at RCU, there is a faculty and departmental structure. There is no head of department but there is a head of Faculty who is responsible for all departments. The key decision making forums include the Subject Committee meetings within the department and Faculty committee meetings. All staff are

invited to attend both of these meetings. The department subject committee meets two or three times per term and the faculty meetings happen twice per term. The meetings are described by Dr Millen as “very streamlined” and “incredibly efficient”. She maintains that “with the faculty meetings the issues are huge so they are much more about financial decisions.” The departmental subject committee meetings deals with teaching and research organisation within the department, including allocation of research money and time off for sabbaticals.

The Chair of the Subject committee, Mr Sawyer, is responsible for co-ordinating these meetings and the distribution of teaching responsibilities as well as “day to day administration work” for course organisation. The average teaching load for a member of staff is 330 contact hours per year that is approximately ten hours of teaching per week. Like the English department at GCU there is a system of small tutorial group teaching at RCU as well as seminars and lectures. This means that there is a lot of staff time needed for teaching. There are a number of part time teachers who work intermittently in the department (predominantly postgraduate students). Mr Sawyer argues that when staff are away on research leave it is often necessary to rely on part time teachers.

Well I am not sure that this is one of the things that you are looking for but one of the impact of there being research money around and our head of school has been a genius at conjuring up research money... has been in my job...the number of people away on leave. So for example...*looks for information*...sorry next term one, two, three, four, five of my colleagues have got bits and pieces of research leave of one kind or another. This is in a department of ten people... So there is quite a bit of juggling in terms of replacing them. Also it hasn't begun to show up yet but I am worried that it might, in the last HEFCE exercise, when they come round and assess teaching... In the last HEFCE exercise we got a rating of excellent which we were very pleased about...but it worries me that an awful lot of our

teaching is being done by part timers. I hasten to add that I used to be a part timer myself and I have very high regard for part timers... But inevitably you know because they are plucked from outside it takes them a while to adjust to what we are doing on the course...how the course fits into the rest of our... So I hope that the undergraduate experience is not being damaged by that. I can see that in some ways...and I am concerned about that. It is early days yet... but to some extent undergraduates are going to have a fractured experience than five, ten years ago...because of the amount of people who are doing that. The fact that research money and research profile seems to be absolutely the centre of everyone's concern whereas ten or fifteen years ago... there were different concerns.

(Mr Sawyer, English, RCU)

Some members of staff in the department argue that the move to university status from being a Polytechnic has resulted in, as Mr Booth argues, a “pressure to research rather than teach.” He maintains that as Polytechnic lecturers, there was “no pressure on us to do anything much else apart from teach” but now being a university, “we seem to have a bit more status and em more time to think and research a bit then we used to have.” The improved position of being a university, therefore, brings a new sense of identity to the department and the individuals within it. Paramount to this is the status achieved by success in research.

Unlike the departmental organisation at GCU, therefore, the English department at RCU is part of a wider school that plays the major role in determining research policy and strategies across the departments. These research policies and strategies can be investigated to uncover further the organisational, managerial and ideational structures of these two departments.

## Research Assessment, Research Policies and Research Activities in English at GCU

In the other part of the RAE, the lists of publications, well obviously that was a case of me speaking to each of the people and saying or agreeing what were the four best publications to put forward because just about everybody had far more than four and the issue was what weighs more, an edition or a monograph. That got very tricky because very often it was unclear in the rules as to quite which was best. I mean I can talk to you about that if you like but eh basically the way that was actually handled, which is what I think you are asking me about now, is that I saw everyone individually and talked through with them this. And we agreed on what was best to put forward. You know em I would never dream of telling anyone you must put forward these four. It was more a matter of a discussion, sharing the problem and seeing how it would look from the outside and we agreed on that.

(Professor Hadfield, head of Department, English, GCU)

The English department at GCU scored a high rating on the 1996 RAE. Members of staff that I spoke to believed, that this result was achieved without strong managerialist pressures. This belief is reiterated by members of staff and seems very important and critical to the self-perception of the staff and the department. Mr Wright, for example, compares his experiences at GCU with his previous institution.

I mean the last institution I was in really was a rather brutal one and there was a lot of the rough end of what the research assessment exercise was all about there. You know internal rivalry and nastiness and brutal attempts to get rid of people and so on and so on. And that really did strike me as being a very unpleasant result. Here I think it is a much more interestingly benign institution. I think in lots of ways it has been much less touched by the horrid hand of the eighties than many places. The management is much more civilised. It is interesting that, you know, it is a very good university in research terms. It is not that one model produces results and another one doesn't. This one seems to manage to be relatively civilised and be a very strong research based university...

(Mr Wright, English, GCU)

Mr Wright contrasts what he sees as the strong managerialist tendencies of other institutions<sup>1</sup> with the relative civility of the collegial relations at Golden County University. This kind of 'contrastive rhetoric' (Hargreaves, 1981) is common in many of the interviews that I conducted, whereby the institution of which one is a member is contrasted favourably against other institutions and institutional practices. However, it is interesting to analyse the extent to which this idea is shared by other members of staff in the department and the extent to which reported practices within this department bear out the claim to collegiality.

It is not so much that staff do not believe that managerial strategies operate within the English department at GCU but that it is perceived to be a form of "humane management" (Dr Ballard, Deputy head of Department). In making this claim Dr Ballard was talking specifically about the university policy of having all staff research active. He states that there is a possibility of a 're-engagement package' (teaching only status) for those members of staff who are not research active. Just as all members of staff are expected to teach, therefore, all are expected to be research active. Professor Hadfield maintains that a full return of staff is being planned for the next RAE, although not all were returned in the 1996 RAE. There is little said by Professor Hadfield or other members of staff on the decision making process of who would and would not be included in the RAE. There is little evidence of dissent over these decisions by staff that I interviewed. Professor Pearson is the only member of staff who discusses this issue in relation to one particular person not included in the 1996 RAE. Professor Pearson,

however, also reiterates the belief in ‘humane management’ of these issues, as discussed earlier.

I think we have managed it fairly humanely... *long pauses*. There have been, I suppose, painful pressures on people who are not producing. One or two people who are not producing...have been demoralised. Now I am thinking of one colleague in particular who is rather a special case. He was deemed by the criteria to be research inactive and in fact he was very productive and research active in a different form. He did a lot of editorial work and he contributed to other people’s research through his editorial work and kept his own knowledge fresh and growing. But for reasons partly...he was not actually producing any original work. Now he was a very useful member of the department. A creative mind in terms of research and in terms of thinking and in terms of teaching but it had a very bad effect on him because he didn’t fit the criteria. It also discourages creative work since creative work isn’t valued in this kind of exercise in the same way that ordinary scholarly research (is)...

(Professor Pearson, English, GCU)

The reason given for the non submission of the member of staff referred to by Professor Pearson was in relation to the type of work and whether this fitted with the criteria given by the RAE panel. Types of research output were ranked by the English Language and Literature panel for the 1996 RAE. These were given as books (including creative writing) being given a top ranking, followed by academic journals, conference contributions and then collections of essays (including editors of such collections) and finally review articles and “all other works” (RAE Criteria for Assessment, 1995). Creative writing, therefore, is given recognition by the panel but only where it “represents original investigation that enhances knowledge and understanding”. The precise categorisation of members of staff and the value of their research work, however, is a contested issue.



The difficulties over the interpretation of criteria used by the panel in the 1996 RAE is discussed by Professor Hadfield, who as head of department is chair of the Research Committee and was a key author of the 1996 RAE submission. He emphasises the difficult choices to be made over the relative value of research publications within English and the relative value of the specific research profiles of individual members of staff. The RAE has a direct impact, therefore, on the classification struggles within departments both in terms of individuals being classified as research active and in terms of the relative worth of research work.

The Research Committee of the department is chaired by Professor Hadfield and is attended by all the Professors. There are four 'research schools' within the department and there is a Director for each of these schools. Professor Hadfield was responsible for drafting the RAE document and this was done in consultation firstly with the research committee and secondly in discussions with the Directors of the research schools and with individual members of staff. Professor Hadfield emphasises the consultative nature of this process. He maintains that; "I did various drafts of the documentation which I passed around to people on the research committee and the Directors of the schools and so we just worked on the plans together. But I was the one in charge of the overall drafting." In terms of deciding on the submission of individual publications, Professor Hadfield talked directly to members of staff. As he explains; "I saw everyone individually and talked this through with them and we agreed on what was best to put forward. You know em I would never dream of telling anyone you must put forward these four. It was more a matter of discussion, sharing the problem and seeing how it

would look from the outside and we agreed on that.” Members of staff concur with this description of the process of decision-making. Mr Wright, for example, maintains that there were “consultations over drafts” and that it was a “mixture of taking initiative and consulting” by the head of department and the research committee.

Most of the staff interviewed were extremely positive about the “supportive environment” for research within the department. These comments came mostly from the Professorial staff but also from the lecturers and senior lecturers. For example, Mr Edmunds enthuses that the “atmosphere is encouraging and positive”. The support given to staff in terms of research includes sabbaticals whereby everyone is entitled to one term off in every seven to do research. Professor Hadfield makes clear that the award of a term off for members of staff is now strictly for research purposes, “with a capital R”. In the past such time could have been used to develop a course or engage in other forms of scholarship but now it is designated for research purposes only. Staff are expected to outline what they intend to achieve during their time away and then a report is produced which is given to the Subject Committee.

There is also a mentoring system within the department. All Professors play the role of mentor to a number of staff and meet with them to discuss research plans and generally to talk about how things are going and give advice or guidance on any research issues. The research committee also now requires that all staff submit details of their research activities annually in the form of an ‘RAE questionnaire’. This information is then stored on a database that is held by the head of department.

Within the English department individuals are fairly autonomous in their research efforts (so long as they meet the RAE criteria) and guidance and encouragement are the key features of the development of the research culture rather than rigid forms of monitoring. All members of staff, to some degree, enthuse about the collegial relations amongst staff and the shared sense of purpose. Either this is a 'collective fiction' shared by all or there is simply a common will to make it a reality. There are two key issues in accounting for this central belief in the unity of staff. Firstly, as discussed earlier, there is a 'them and us' approach to unification. Pressure, where it is felt and negative influences, where they appear, are deemed to come from external sources - central administration or government changes and restructuring of universities. Secondly, the positive attitude towards staff and the 'sense of understanding' expressed by the head of department and other Professorial staff of the pressures which individuals are under and the belief in the pride which they have in their work.

Professor Hadfield, for example, is insistent that asking members of staff for four publications in four years is not "particularly onerous". He talks about having trust in staff to know what is the right thing to do. Furthermore, he understands the personal involvement which staff have with their work.

...in the Humanities one's work is awfully personal to one. We do of course have common projects but really in the humanities it is still very personal. It is like a marriage with an idea that you live with for a long period of time and very often divorce is very painful. Em so em and that is very difficult because you are looking at, it is not just em work in terms of production. You are looking at what people have thought about and lived with for many years of their lives and this is very

precious to them. It is not just a commodity and you can't treat it as such it is just so insulting.

(Professor Hadfield, head of Department, English, GCU)

However, beyond the sense of harmony present within the department is the possibility that this has been achieved by a form of exclusion of non research active staff and therefore exclusion of the explicit conflicting interests within the department. Little mention is made of the number of staff (approximately one third) who have left the department to go elsewhere or have retired in the recent past. A comment from one member of staff indicates that these individuals were not research active for RAE purposes.

Well we have meetings with our mentees outside and we have lunch with them or whatever and then we report back to the research committee. It is not terribly... and we just say yes Bloggs is not a problem or whatever. I mean in our department the people who are problems have been got rid off and you know I have to say I think the whole scene is quite ghastly and no doubt you... however so you know the people that I am mentor for are all beavering away like mad and producing just as they should do. So the kinds of conversations that we have, in fact I can't remember back to before 1996 so I don't know if I can be of any use to you. I think we have got all this in place much more firmly after the last RAE than before. I think before the last RAE we did have this system but it was more haphazard and was less successful in that we had a whole lot of, a number of research inactive people. Well I think they have all gone.<sup>2</sup>

The expression of community and collegiality within the department may be strengthened by the more 'strong managerial' pressures from outside, the 'us' and 'them' discussed earlier. The existence of a collegial spirit, therefore, may exist in a variety of forms and at different levels of institutional organisation. Within the context of the English department at GCU collegiality is dependent primarily on equality, particularly equality of the

division of labour and equality of the worth given to these different activities. All members of staff must be involved equally in all activities and for research practices, these are defined by the importance of RAE criteria. Those individuals unable to meet these criteria would find their position very difficult. For this reason, retirement can become an option for those members of staff.

### **Research Assessment, Research Policies and Research Activities in English at RCU**

It has always been, if you go back to let us say 1980 then it has always been there, we have always wanted to do research... and time off and money to support research. But the urgency has certainly stacked up. Certainly leading up to and since the last RAE em people tend to think of the needs to obtain external research funding as a vital component of the continuing survival of the department... That is the kind of ambience...in departmental discussions and so on. And as we appoint people ... we have a system whereby in English for instance, all of us look at all of the applications and all make our own short lists and then have a meeting where we kind of gel those together. And for the last two appointments at some stage in the decision making process notions that such and such is a good teacher or sounds an interesting person, all of that gets put aside because what is seen as utterly paramount is a likely publication pattern in the next few years so that it will score well in the next RAE. So in a sense yes that has now become absolutely vital.

(Mr Bond, English, RCU)

At RCU the funding given from HEFCE for research is directly given back to faculties (after a percentage is 'top sliced' by central administration) and this funding is then distributed to departments. The English department at RCU received a low rating in the 1996 RAE and so for this reason was not entitled to any research funding from this source. However, due to the research mission of the Humanities faculty and the relative research success of the other departments, a sum of internal research funding was

awarded to the English department as a means of aiding the improvement of its research profile in line with the other departments.

There were 50% of staff in the department returned as research active in the 1996 RAE. One member of staff was returned under another UOA but everyone else was deemed research inactive or did not have the required research output (of four publications). The faculty has a research committee<sup>3</sup> that is responsible for research policy and strategy across all the departments. Two Professors within the faculty are nominated as research co-ordinators. This forum is also responsible for decision making concerning the RAE submissions. Because of its high average scoring on the RAE, the Humanities faculty at RCU perceives itself to be successful in research relative to other 'new' universities and there is substantial evidence both from interviews and documentation from the faculty that the continual improvement of research success is an important focus. This is constantly stated in the research documentation of the faculty.

The faculty research committee, therefore, is primarily responsible for the strategy of all departments and for RAE submissions. Research issues are also discussed within the subject committee meetings in the English department but these relate primarily to issues of sabbatical leave and allocation of internal funding given to the department. The faculty research committee, however, manages overall research budgets. In the past (when the institution had Polytechnic status) budgets were handled centrally but these have now been devolved to faculties. The consequence of this is greater powers of decision-making and control over appointments and funding for faculty heads.

For the RAE submission for 1996 less than half of the members of staff were put forward. Those members of staff not submitted did not have the required number of four publications. There are also a small number of PhD students in the department of 5 (FTE) and no external research funding. All of these factors were believed to have resulted in English receiving a low RAE rating. It is also argued that the English department had received much lower amounts of internal funds within the faculty relative to other departments, which constrained growth and expansion of research activities.<sup>4</sup>

Decision making on the submission of staff to the 1996 RAE was not in dispute by those individuals not submitted. Unlike the cases of individuals in English at GCU, there was little struggle over submission status by those staff that I interviewed in the English department at RCU. There were two kinds of people who fell into this category. Firstly, those new members of staff who had not yet accumulated sufficient publications but were very keen to substantiate their research activities, e.g Dr Millen, and those members of staff who defined themselves primarily as teachers, e.g Mr Booth, Mr Bond, and Mr Sawyer. The latter individuals were more concerned with the value being placed on research activities at the expense of what they see as their more primary role, that of teaching.

Well there is, we don't win as much (funding)...because we never have been a research driven department like (other departments in the faculty), who I think for historical reasons. Partly for historical reasons and partly because I think there are people in (another department) who aren't team players in quite the same way as the English field has had to be in the past. They are much more determinedly selfish and perhaps correctly selfish in seeing their own position and their own future as

being more important than the institution at large. Have always carved out for themselves much more time for research than we have traditionally in English and it is a major problem in the running of the school actually. There is a kind of imbalance there and the ethos of the different departments in the school and how much they value research and how much they see teaching as their primary profession.

(Mr Booth, English, RCU)

There is a radically increased concern with research activity within the faculty and this has resulted in specific research policies and strategies being put in place. As Dr Groves argues, “there is now a strategy and forms of monitoring of research in the faculty” and “both at the faculty and the department level there is active intervention to increase research output”. The key features of these interventions are related to staffing, funding and monitoring. The faculty has sought to increase appointments where possible through the use of both internal and external funding.

The ‘research culture’ of the faculty is promoted by mentoring within the department. Unlike the English department at GCU where mentoring takes place on an individual one to one basis, the emphasis at RCU is on ‘collaborative and/or interdisciplinary research programmes’ within the faculty. This involves research mentoring of those departments with a high RAE rating and those with a low rating. So it is more a strategy of merging research interests across disciplines than having one to one discussions on development. The faculty has an interdisciplinary research centre that runs conferences and regular lectures, seminars and lunch time meetings which serves to bring together researchers with common interests and to serve as a promotional and instructional forum for research activities within the faculty.



Finally, the faculty also has in place a detailed system of monitoring. This serves the dual purpose of ensuring the continued improvement of research activities and providing a measure of research productivity for selectivity purposes. The school strategy states that “only active researchers with recognisable milestones and designated outputs have been and will be supported.” Individual staff members, therefore, are required to submit a detailed report on their research work and how they intend to develop their research in the future. Each department also has to produce a detailed strategy report that specifically identifies how RAE criteria will be met. There is an explicit process of monitoring of staff activities (Parker and Jary, 1994). The English department has been given some priority funding by the school in order to make new appointments and support research leave for members of staff. Detailed planning is in place, therefore, to extend and develop the research activities within the school and scoring highly on RAE’s is of significant importance. A substantial number of individuals within the English department, however, do not identify themselves with the research vision that the faculty promotes.

Some key principles of differentiation have emerged quite clearly in the discussion of the organisational, managerial and ideational structures of these departments. Teaching and research is an important form of differentiation particularly at RCU and shall therefore be analysed in more depth.

## **Principles of Differentiation of Academic Work with English departments**

A department which has a superabundance of undergraduates whom it is prepared to teach will, if its research rating is poor, be made to feel inadequate but it will not close down and no teacher will be made redundant. A department of scholars that does not attract students is in serious trouble unless it receives substantial outside funds and unless somehow the institution feels it can use that group solely for prestige purposes. And yet, paradoxically, the teaching role in universities is extremely insubstantial and the unhappiest people, it seems to me, are those who are essentially educationalists. (Evans, 1993: 81)

According to data from HESA, humanities subjects<sup>5</sup>, including English studies, have the highest percentage of staff employed on permanent contracts which are financed by institutions. Permanent staff make up 72% of the staff population in universities compared to 37% and 66% for Biological Sciences and Social Studies respectively. Similarly, 90% of Humanities staff are funded by their institution compared with 48% for Biosciences and 85% for Social Studies. These differences may be accounted for primarily by the relatively low number of staff employed in Humanities subjects on temporary, 'research only' contracts compared with science and social science disciplines. The majority of staff in the Humanities, 80%, are employed on 'teaching and research' contracts, with 13% on 'research only' contracts and 7% on 'teaching only'<sup>6</sup> contracts.

Beyond the formal status and terms of contract given to members of staff, however, is a diverse process of differentiation of responsibilities and duties. The English department at GCU comes closest to fitting the model of having all staff engaged in teaching and

research duties, with a regular rotation of administrative responsibilities. The equality of teaching duties was emphasised at GCU as well as the intention for all members of staff to be returned as research active in the RAE. At RCU, on the other hand, almost 50% of staff were classified as research inactive. The distribution of teaching and administrative duties were not perceived to be unequal by the members of staff I interviewed. What was of most concern, however, was that teaching was perceived to be a “low status activity” (Mr Bond, English, RCU). This concurs with what Evans (1993) described as the “marginalization of teaching” and as the quotation above suggests, teaching, despite its seminal position within university departments, is accorded less value than research. This argument has been put forward within all of the departments studied, primarily by those members of staff with greater involvement in teaching activities rather than research.

A central belief concerning the division of research and teaching activities within these departments, but expressed most profusely by members of staff at RCU, is that research is seen as a “selfish” activity, practised by and for individuals and directed outside of the institution. Teaching, on the other hand, is perceived to be a more selfless practice and is firmly rooted in the ‘internal community’ of the institution. The quotation given by Mr Booth in the previous section outlined the perception of researchers being the kind of people who “go away and do their own thing” in a selfish, individualistic way outside of the institution. By contrast his own practices are very much tied up with the institution.

I operate very much within the institution, in a small part of the institution and em I think within my own department I hope that people would listen seriously to what I had to say and not think me a complete baffoon. But that is as far as it goes I don’t have any clout outside. A very parochial patch y’know.

(Mr Booth, English, RCU)

Mr Sawyer also describes himself as being “institutionally based” and links this attitude to the particular history of RCU which he sees as having been primarily a “teaching institution” serving the local community. However, he argues that having external contacts with other institutions has “become central to the way we operate now”. Making contacts and developing a research profile outside of the institution, therefore, has become very important not only for the individual researcher but for the common good of the department and the institution as a whole. To be “parochial” and not develop external research interests would now arguably be considered “selfish” and in the words of Mr Booth to be “letting the side down”.

**Mr Booth:** Y’know that I have to keep trying even if I am not very successful I am going to try and think in research terms while before, for the twenty odd years that I have been in the job I have never thought of myself as a researcher at all.

**Interviewer:** So do you feel that there is a specific pressure on you to do that or do you just feel ...?

**Mr Booth:** Yes a little, I don’t eh I am very much I think a team player, em I don’t see activities of this kind as a path to success individually but I would feel as if, If I didn’t at least try and do my best, I would be letting the side down. I am terribly English about that sort of thing. So em I will persevere but another half of me thinking, counting off the years till I retire when it won’t matter anymore anyway.

Evans (1993) argues that “research is for universities a major requirement but it is not institutionalised in the same way as teaching and administration”. He maintains that “the institution expects it to be done at the margins by ambitious, committed individuals”.

Research work is certainly done “at the margins” in the sense that many academics spend

evenings and weekends on their research work. However, the evidence collected from these departments suggests that “the major requirement” of research activity is becoming increasingly more institutionalised. Thus all members of staff are expected to engage in research work. The fact that this can no longer be seen as simply an individual concern or interest but an institutional one, is testament to the importance and significance of this change.

The local/cosmopolitan concept of different academic roles (Gouldner, 1971) would have to be re-assessed in light of this evidence. The terms of participation in such categories have changed. Institutional loyalty, which was the role of the ‘local’ can no longer simply be fulfilled by teaching and involvement in ‘local’ institutional issues. One’s national and international reputation in research has now also become important to institutional loyalty. This often requires time out of the institution. The concept of a ‘local’ academic, whether a valid distinction or not, may no longer be appropriate to the UK academics in the 1990s

To what extent does the increasing institutionalisation of research activity affect the economy of time spent by the academic staff in these departments? A further issue is the extent to which academics are motivated to accumulate forms of academic capital and the specific value attached to these forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1988).

Alongside the evidence from the departments of Biology and Sociology, there is substantial evidence from the English departments that there has been an increase in

pressure on academic time (Court, 1996). It is difficult for individual staff members to quantify the amount of time spent on teaching, research and administration. Also there are no set percentages given as guidelines within either of the English departments. The teaching loads at GCU averages ten contact hours per week for all members of staff and the rest of the time is taken up with preparation for teaching, administration and research. It is reported by some members of staff that the majority of pressure on their time comes from administration. This perception of the increase in administration is also put forward by Mr Edmunds who maintains, “Oh there is a lot of admin that has to be done by em academics, the routine admin that goes along with teaching and supervising students and so on. Em there’s a lot of admin that goes on as well to do with examining and quality assessment.”

Dr Groves, a Principal Lecturer at RCU also argues that there can be a conflict between administration and research resulting in a trade off with time spent on these activities. This can mean, for example, that you “do not want to attend meetings” because they take up time which could be spent on research.

The primary routes to the accumulation of academic capital, therefore, become less important where this detracts from time which could be spent on research. Key institutional positions which accord academic capital such as head of department or Subject Committee Chair become onerous tasks (similarly for equivalent external positions). The production of student textbooks and other forms of academic production are perceived as less worthwhile activities. Mr Booth, for example, is active in producing

student texts but he recognises that these do not make for an “impressive publications list”.

The importance of research is being underlined within the English departments. As Dr Ballard argues, the once multiple and differential abilities and commitments “have now become one primary commitment”. Echoing Bourdieu (1988) who argues that a substitute is made between “a plurality of worlds controlled by different laws for the unified world of differences produced by one dominant hierarchical principle”, namely that of research. However, with research work the process of division and struggles for recognition remain.

### **Principles of Differentiation of Research Work with English departments**

**Professor Rosewall:** So of course em a research positive climate, a climate which favours research which is willing to put resources into backing research is going to help that is clear. But there is something mysterious about what makes people want to write or able to write that maybe beyond all that.

**Interviewer:** You say that it is mysterious?

**Professor Rosewall:** It is mysterious in the way that human beings are mysterious you know. It has to do with what they want out of life isn't it, their priorities. This is why, I mean watching other people over the years I can see that there, they change, sometimes being productive and writing five books in one year is the most important thing they want to do and then they want to do something else with their life. And there is a kind of assumption in a sense behind the whole research culture philosophy that we will always be equally productive. People always ought to do something but the drivenness that is behind a lot of research, the drivenness comes from elsewhere don't you think?

One of the key principle of differentiation of research work for the English departments, as with all the other departments discussed, is that of being defined as research active or non research active. Those members of staff defined as non research active can be placed into three different groupings. Firstly, there are those members of staff who are just beginning their academic careers and have yet to build up a research profile and publications list, secondly, there are those individuals who have 'opted out' of research activities, and thirdly, there are the researchers who despite being actively engaged in research are not classified as such. These 'groupings' of staff should not however be read as fixed or as ordering the academics interviewed into 'types'. The reality of these positions is much more fluid and dynamic. In order to understand the definition of 'research' and 'research active' within the context of English studies, it is important to analyse the struggles of classification (Bourdieu, 1988) over these activities. Although for RAE purposes, individuals may be classified into different categories, I am interested in the process of categorisation and the struggles for classification. Trowler (1998) similarly argues that the individual responses and positions of academics should be analysed and not too readily classified into types. The values and beliefs of academics are not fixed but involve "struggles to resolve competing interests and values" (Trowler, 1998).

The quotation by Professor Rosewall (see above) makes the point that the research process and the process of writing within English studies is not so easily managed. It is a 'mysterious process' which depends on a sense of 'drivenness' by the researcher. The 'mysterious process' could be accounted for in part by an understanding of the individual's 'academic habitus' (Bourdieu, 1988). But it is also highly dependent on the



accumulation of research capital (symbolic, material, social and cultural). Before discussing the particular forms of research capital evident within English studies, I will first outline in summary the criteria for research excellence set out the 1996 RAE statement for the English Language and Literature panel. The full list of criteria is given in Appendix 11.

The key determinants of research excellence outlined within the RAE process is that of research defined as 'original investigation' and the categories of national and international excellence. However, the English panel makes clear that the different forms of output and publications would also be taken into consideration. It was not a straightforward process for the authors of research submissions to decide which forms of output were more valued than others. At GCU, for example, Professor Hadfield outlined the difficulties of making judgement on academic 'value'.

**Interviewer:** Did you look closely at the criteria that was set out for the English...?

**Professor Hadfield:** Yes we did but it is not terribly helpful you see because em if you are worried about what particular biases may be in the RAE panel. I mean if you have an edition, you know how scholarly and how important does an edition have to be in order for it to weigh more than a single authored monograph and there is a kind of half joke, half truth about the RAE as it does single authored monograph over everything else and therefore you could have an extremely scholarly edition but you know it is felt rightly or wrongly that that doesn't quite weigh as much as a single authored monograph, because that has got your name on it, even though it might not be all that good as it were. We can discuss the issue of quantity versus quality if you like but that was a problem. Then there was the issue of how to present certain things. I mean if you are an editor or a co-editor of an anthology and you got a major article in that anthology, is it better to put in the article or is it better to put in the anthology. And in my view it is better to put in the article and you can always. You may recall in the last RAE that there was this line or two that you had for extra information and I always put editor as well as something(...).

Evidence also from the research meetings at RCU indicate how they are attempting to judge the relative importance of what has been called the “second order reading of the signs” of reputation (Bourke, 1997), namely the specific journals or publishing houses through which the research is published. At the staff meeting they discuss in detail the possible hierarchy of publishing houses such as the University Presses and ‘reputable’ International Publishers. Using these signs of reputation, they attempt to calculate their own collective publications within the department and the potential ‘value’ based on RAE criteria. They also discuss ways in which those publication outlets that are rated most highly can be the target for members of staff in the department. Ultimately, however, there is no absolute certainty as to the ‘value’ placed on some forms of publication over others (and these are not explicitly stated in the RAE criteria).

Similarly, the distinction made between national and international standards of excellence proves a difficult process of differentiation for the individuals involved in writing the RAE submissions. The struggle over classification of ‘international’ is centred on one’s external reputation. At GCU, for example, the participants at the research meeting conclude that simply attending international conferences, giving papers or chairing discussions do not count. In order to demonstrate an international reputation one must be invited to address conferences (particularly as a keynote speaker) or be invited to present special lectures. Members of staff at RCU were less concerned with this distinction. The main struggle over classification of these individuals was that of type of publication output. In order to explore these forms of differentiation further, it is possible to look at

different forms of symbolic 'research capital' (material, social and cultural) which are operative within these departments and have 'currency' within English studies.

In terms of material capital, Fellowships (particularly those granted from the British Academy) and other sources of research funding are the most prominent. At RCU they had no Fellowships and no external research funding at the time of the 1996 RAE but post-1996 had secured one Fellowship from a charity source. Staff made little mention about applying for external sources of income. Dr Groves had received Research Fellowships that covered travel and subsistence to do research work in the U.S. But apart from travelling to gather research sources, there is little need for Dr Groves to have research funding. His research, as he describes, relies on 'scholarly solitude', the greatest currency for this is time to read and write. The solitary, book based nature of research work within English means that there is a lack of necessity for substantial material funds. Most of the funds that are granted are used to release time from teaching and travel to conferences or to specialist institutes to search archives.

The solitary, individual nature of much research in English also determines the forms of social capital. These can be identified as research groupings within and across departments, specific groups within a research specialism and also attendance at conferences and meetings. The RAE submission for both departments has 'groupings' of staff within particular research areas. At GCU they are divided into four 'schools' and at RCU they are divided into five 'clusters'. The extent of research collaboration between individuals, however, is variable with many staff working on their own.

Participation in national associations of research specialisms is more common in the field of English. At GCU, for example, Mr Wright is a member of a research association so that he has a large number of contacts in his research area. This grouping is however, as he describes, “too informal to call it a grouping but there are just a number of people who happen to be working in somewhat similar areas at several universities. It is as loose as that”. Interactions between members take place at “day conferences, committees and also the circulation of regular bulletins”. It is within such specialism associations, however, that one can substantiate a reputation for one’s work, which is outside of the institution. This can be further enhanced by the attendance at conferences and specialist meetings.

Finally, there are forms of *cultural capital*. One important educational component of cultural capital is the award of a doctorate. Many of the staff interviewed in the English departments who were not classified as research active did not possess doctorates. As Mr Booth argued it is now a necessary ‘initiation rite’ within higher education to have a doctorate. Mr Booth also argues that the discipline has become more ‘professionalized’ which relates not only to research success but also particular approaches to research.

You see I hadn’t got a Ph.D. and I think that makes an enormous difference in terms of how you view yourself y’know as a researcher. I think there was a period way back in the 1920’s and 30’s, of a sort of gentleman scholar where such things were not I think necessary but I think the development of modern research techniques and the whole specialisation and interplay of theory, this big thing theory now in English studies, has meant that unless you really have sat down for three years or more and with professional guidance actually got your head around at least a corner of the market and know your way around it, you are under a tremendous disadvantage to actually write scholarship that people are going to actually want to read. Now I think there is an arrogant side to that and a totally

boring and self defeating side to that but it is part of the, if you like, the hardening edges of the discipline and the professionalisation of it. We all have to be amateur Marxists or amateur psychologists or amateur something in order to say anything about literature that is going to be taken seriously.

(Mr Booth, English, RCU)

Mr Booth here emphasises the importance of the time economy of research, the necessity of building up a research profile through years of dedicated work to a particular research area. But this time economy can be split between the process of production and the processes of representation of research work (Bourdieu, 1988). Mr Savery also gives a profile of the new 'professional' English researcher.

**Mr Savoury:** Yes I guess and in many ways there are pay off for that but it seems much more professional. People are much more conscious of how you manage your CV, how you organise your life around publications and public profile and so on. There are very positive dimensions to this I think and I... I think it was more generous, more leisurely in some way, culture within the department. But it may have also been less geared towards the wider audience, you know talking to colleagues and teaching and so on and not engaging enough in larger events.

**Interviewer:** So becoming more specialised?

**Mr Savery:** Now, I think we have become more specialised em and more building up around one project leading to another, a more driven rational version of a professional career I think has emerged. And I guess I don't find myself, I don't easily identify with it. I am impressed by it but I don't actually incorporate it...

The positioning of individuals within the multiple disciplinary and institutional structures, therefore, is critical for understanding their particular *dispositions* and *practices* and also strongly influences their unique *position-taking* with respect to the RAE.

## **Structural Positioning and the Construction of a 'English' 'Habitus': changing dispositions and practices**

The English departments at GCU and RCU are very different in a number of ways. The department at GCU is very large with over thirty members of staff whilst RCU is small with just over ten members of staff. The RAE rating for GCU was at the top end of the scale and the corresponding rating for RCU was at the lower end. This chapter has discussed the different academic and research cultures in each of these departments and the different research strategies and policies. This section will look at the interests and strategies of the English academics within the different structural locations of these institutional settings.

I interviewed ten members of staff in the English department at GCU. Three of whom were Professors, three Senior Lecturers and four Lecturers. Of those ten individuals, one was head of department, one Deputy head and one Chair of the Subject Committee. All of the staff in the department that I interviewed were returned as research active in the RAE except the relatively new members who had joined the department just after finishing their PhD. At RCU I interviewed five members of staff of whom only one was returned as research active in the RAE. This included one Principal Lecturer, three Senior Lecturers and one Lecturer. All of these individuals had joined the department during the 1970's with the exception of Dr Millen who was a recent appointment having just finished a PhD at another institution. The status of staff in both English departments is given in Appendix 12.

The division of labour for these English academics is closer to that of the Sociologists than the Biologists. There are no 'research only' appointments and the teaching loads are the same for all members of staff regardless of status. The classification of research active or research non active is important however for an understanding of the *habitus* of these English academics and their dispositions and practices in terms of the accumulation of academic and research capital as the individual 'cases' will illustrate.

### **English Staff Classified as Research Active**

#### *Professor Rosewall (GCU)*

Professor Rosewall has been at GCU for ten years. She is the Director of an interdisciplinary research centre. Her research interests are varied and diverse. She claims to have too many research interests which she believe is not a sensible RAE strategy. She is a generalist and has research interests in a multitude of areas rather than developing an international reputation in one specialist area.

No em you know the book that I am writing now, I want to stop just writing articles or chapters or whatever people ask me to do. Em and really yes and really get a monograph...(.)a colleague and I are editing a set of essays and we are putting essays in ourselves on one thing. And there is another set of essays I am editing which I will only contribute an introduction to. But the monograph, and then you know then I get just chapters and articles. But the monograph on my (research area), I am really focusing on that. And that is a totally RAE generated, well it is not totally RAE generated but I mean there is a terrible sense with the RAE that you have got to have a monograph for the next RAE. So I am looking to be able to present one alongside other things. (Professor Rosewall, English, GCU)

Due to her reputation in a particular research area, Professor Rosewall receives numerous requests to contribute to edited collections. However, she is resisting the possibility of having a “whole research career generated by other people’s priorities”. For this reason, she is keen to publish in journal articles and particularly to complete her monograph. Her strategies for research capital accumulation are heavily influenced by RAE considerations and particularly the perception that monographs are more highly rated. This is explicitly stated in the 1996 RAE criteria set by the English panel. She is also concerned to consolidate her research interests and be less involved in too many research areas, since she believes that RAE criteria demand an international reputation in a specialist area.

Professor Rosewall also has many teaching and administrative duties which take up her time. She sits on a number of departmental and university committees. In the department she is on the research committee and the graduate committee. Her interests and involvement in university and department affairs is wide. Her status and positioning within the department, both in term of research and teaching is highly regarded and centrally placed. She runs a successful research centre with many graduate students (approximately 25-30 PhD students and 30-40 MA students). Her only concern is to ensure the continuation of her research work and to avoid complacency when faced with relative success. She says “I have ten more years to go, that one doesn’t think well I’ve got it all in the bank now. I think you have to keep moving forward right to the end”.



Other members of staff, however, when faced with multiple pressures of teaching, administration and research, are more inclined towards retirement even when there is a continued interest in academic pursuits.

*Mrs Jeffries (GCU)*

Mrs Jefferies is currently Chair of the Subject Committee. She has taken over this post for one year only to replace a colleague who took early retirement and changed to a part time contract. Mrs Jefferies has been at GCU for almost thirty years. She began her lectureship at GCU before finishing an MA, but she does not have a PhD. She plans to take early retirement but would like to be retained on a part time contract. She believes that being part time will mean that she has more time for research, particularly in terms of time to spend at libraries which she argues can be notoriously difficult during vacation but much easier during term time. She would, therefore, continue to teach at GCU on a part time basis.

Mrs Jefferies enthuses about her research work and talks at length about it. She was included in the 1996 RAE having four publications but finds it difficult generally to work to timetables. "My curiosity leads me" she says, "and I don't sort of think sufficiently firmly in terms of, I need this length of time to write it up and it has got to be published by then." For this reason she feels unsuited to the time bound culture of RAE deadlines. Moreover, she has been involved in translation work and "found translating quite a

pleasure” and “would like to do more of that” but is aware that “it doesn’t seem to count very high for the RAE scale of things”.

Members of staff at RCU, particularly those not active in research also see retirement as a possibility for escaping the pressures of academic life.

### **English Staff Classified as Non Research Active**

#### *Mr Sawyer (RCU)*

Mr Sawyer joined the English department at GCU twenty five years ago. He is currently the Subject Chair, which involves chairing meetings, distributing teaching loads and day to day administration. A substantial proportion of his time, therefore, is spent on these activities which serve to reproduce the academic system and consequently he accrues *academic capital* in his position. As a compensation he has less undergraduate teaching to do. In terms of research, however, he feels out of touch with the current RAE climate and with the “fact that research money and research profile seems to be the centre of everyone’s concern”. He has published work in the past and felt that was a time “when I has something different to say and I said it”. But he now feels unable to produce publications to demand as he feels is required by the RAE. He is interested in research and publishing but not to any particular time scale or level of production. Like Mrs Jeffries, therefore, his current end goal strategy is retirement since he feels the academic

environment has changed into a competitive and divisive one. His interests and certainly any strategies to compete in this social field have ceased.

Other members of staff faced with a similar lack of *research capital* have renewed their interests and strategies towards the accumulation of *academic capital* and continue to struggle towards an accumulation of *research capital*.

### *Mr Booth (RCU)*

Mr Booth began his career in teacher training and then moved into English studies in 1975. He describes himself as a teacher rather than a researcher. Most of his efforts are directed at teaching and his publications have been mainly for “aiding the teaching rather than pure research”. So, for example, he has been involved in producing textbooks for students. He argues that although the roles of teacher and researcher are not necessarily in opposition, they are demanding in different ways.

And it really does depend, at the end of the day, whether you see your primary role as being a teacher and inspirer of the young or whether you see yourself as the producer of em books and scholarship. These two things aren't necessarily exclusive but they tend to be in my experience, people tend to be teaching people or going away and doing their own thing sort of people. There is overlap, you can get and there is some truth in the case that em there is something to be said and I think it is quite true that some very good researchers are wonderful teachers. It is not as true I think as some people wish because I think the demands of research are so all devouring and encourage you to be intensely selfish. It is very difficult then to just turn off because teaching is exhausting. It may not be exhausting in the way that teaching a primary school is exhausting but it is still exhausting. It is giving of yourself and it is a fairly tiring and selfless activity I think with teaching. It requires effort in preparation and effort in delivery and effort in marking and feedback and

that does actually take up a lot of time that if people think they are good researchers will resent. It is a circle that is difficult to square.

Mr Booth does not have a Ph.D. and without a Ph.D. and a substantial research trajectory as part of his career history, Mr Booth feels somewhat at odds with the new demands being made for research productivity of staff within the department.

I have been trying to work on another article but it is still very much in the early stages and I can't see the end of it, whether it is going to work, whether it is publishable or not. But of course I shall keep at it for the simple reason that em I now find myself, as we all do in this situation, where I don't have much choice. Y'know that I have to keep trying even if I am not very successful I am going to try and think in research terms while before, for the twenty odd years that I have been in the job I have never thought of myself as a researcher at all.

Mr Booth is changing his practices and reorienting himself towards a strategic accumulation of research capital in much the same way that the 'new recruits' of these departments, such as Dr Millen (RCU) and Dr Honner (GCU) who are learning how to 'play the research game'.

Strategies for getting publications dominates the research practices of these two individuals. However, this can be a difficult process and not easy for beginning researchers to get started especially when like Dr Honner, one is working in an 'urban' (Becher, 1989) research area which is "contentious and competitive". As he explains:

Research work can be divided into periods and can be a problem. (There is) encouragement for people to stay within those fields of study. If you are working at the junctures (1820s and 30s) then it might be difficult to get work published. Not necessarily because of individual prejudice but the fields tend to be self-confirming.

Learning the 'rules of the game' both within the disciplinary and sub-specialist field, therefore can be difficult and this is now accompanied by the corresponding modes of evaluation of research work within the RAE process.

The embeddedness of RAE criteria in the struggles and strategies of individuals as well as at the department level is very explicit and the concern of new members of staff in particular with explicit publication strategies implies a new form of enculturation within university departments which defines both the production of disciplinary knowledge and the more general meaning and significance of academic work. Evidence from the interviewees in the English departments at GCU and RCU show clearly that all 'research active' staff orient their strategies and practices of publication, funding proposals, conference attendance (all forms of investment in *symbolic capital*) towards RAE criteria. 'Non-research active' members of staff have a similar orientation to their academic practices, particularly those who are 'new recruits' at the beginning of their careers. Others, predominantly those members of staff with a large investment in academic capital attempt to subvert the dominant value accorded to research activities by refusing to engage in research activities and arguing instead for the positive recognition of forms of *academic capital*. These forms of struggle take place within particular institutional and disciplinary structures, the former of which has been discussed in detail within the chapter.

The organisation, managerial and ideational structures of these two English departments are very different in a number of ways, influenced in part by their size and ratings for

research. In each case there is a struggle to improve and maintain research activity. But what this means and the way in which it is executed is very different in each context. At GCU the focus is on ensuring the production of research work and the reputation of research staff within an international context. Whilst at RCU, on the other hand, a more explicit research goals were identified that were complicit with RAE criteria but focused mainly on encouraging staff to achieve the minimum of four publications.

The struggles of staff within the English departments have much in common with that of staff in the Biology and Sociology departments, despite the difference in departmental and disciplinary organisation. Common themes, such as *capital* accumulation, the importance of *positioning* of academic staff and the possibility of identifying an ‘academic’ or ‘disciplinary’ *habitus* will all be drawn together in the final conclusion.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Wright talks in more detail about what he sees as the “cut throat nastiness and the sort of eighties (entrepreneurial and competitive) nastiness as well” which he argues is “not a culture that really promotes academic excellence”. He conclude by saying “As you should know coming from Warwick”. [Evidence here of the ‘real is relational’ and question of definition of ‘competitiveness’, with competitiveness over funding/ranking versus competitiveness over ‘symbolic value’.]

<sup>2</sup> For confidentiality purposes this individual shall not be identified.

<sup>3</sup> I was scheduled to attend a research committee meeting but was asked at the last minute not to attend. No explanation was given although the normal reason for not allowing me to attend meetings is to do with confidentiality (often to protect individuals being discussed).

<sup>4</sup> Details taken from the Research Audit in the School of Humanities.

<sup>5</sup> Figures are taken from Higher Education Statistics Agency data. The data is listed by cost centre and so cannot be broken down into individual disciplines such as English studies.

<sup>6</sup> This figure does not account for numbers of postgraduates and teaching assistants within departments.

## CONCLUSION

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**Bourdieu:** One last and critical point on this: *social agents* are not '*particles*' that are mechanically pushed about by external forces. They are, rather, bearers of capital and, depending on the position that they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they tend to act either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution (things are of course much more complicated than that). I think that this is a simplified but general proposition that applies to social space as a whole, although it does not imply that all small capital holders are revolutionaries and all big capital holders are automatically conservatives.

**Wacquant:** The field is thus not only a battle of forces, a space of objective force lines, but also a battlefield, a structured arena within which agents, because they have different potentials and have different positions and proclivities, struggle to (re) define the very structures and boundaries of the field.

**Bourdieu:** Correct, but they do not struggle freely: they struggle in a manner consistent with the position they occupy in the field. They are differentiated on the basis of the perception that they have of the field, of the point of view they take *on* the field as a view taken from a point *in* the field.

(Bourdieu, 1989b: 8)

At the time of writing this thesis, the submissions of departments for the 2001 RAE are underway. Coincidentally the submission deadline for this thesis falls on the census date for the 2001 RAE. The issue of reflexivity is ever present as the position of myself as a researcher is embedded within the academic structures and 'rules of the game' that are being investigated.

Many consultations have occurred since the RAE in 1996 between the HEFCE and the academic community and there have been subsequent alterations made to the

procedures and processes, including changes to the criteria used by panels in some disciplines. Some of what was being done in 1996 has already been changed and modified, although the main principles of the emphasis on quality rather than quantity of publications, the rating scales and the broad criteria of national/international have remained. What this thesis provides, however, is an analytical snap shot of academic life and work in a sample of university departments in the late 1990s. The extent to which the findings presented here can be relevant beyond these particular institutions and departments remains to be investigated within future studies.

Much of the literature on higher education written during the 1980s and 1990s makes claims for the immense changes and upheavals in academic life so that to some extent the only constant seems to be that of continual change. However, the significance of the introduction of the RAE has been of huge importance to the conduct and evaluation of academic life and work at all levels of university organisation and for academics themselves. This research, therefore, takes place at an important moment in the evolving system of UK higher education institutions. The intention of the study was not simply to look at a hypothetically causal relationship between a policy change such as the RAE and academic practices but more to gain an understanding of academic life and work in university departments in the late 1990s.



This thesis follows an analytical framework that aims to understand and account for academic practices within institutional and disciplinary structures. The work of Pierre Bourdieu has been utilised as an analytical framework for the study. This approach does not give a comprehensive theory to be either proven or disproved but instead provides some analytical tools and concepts that can be applied anew to different areas of social life. This analytical framework is predicated on a questioning of many dualities found in sociological work including the relationship between structure and agency and the subject/object divide. Often charged with determinism, Bourdieu argues that individuals “are determined only to the extent that they determine themselves” (Bourdieu, 1989b: 8).

Bourdieu argues that the positioning of individuals within a social space orients their practice and interests in a particular direction to either reproduce or subvert the status quo and the distribution of capital (see opening quotation). Furthermore, he posits a state of conflict and competition within social fields for the accumulation of symbolic capital in order to gain recognition within that area of social life. These two insights can be applied to a study of the academic field. Some of the literature on higher education (Scott, 1984)) emphasises the consensual nature of practices, values and beliefs amongst academics. This study by contrast was concerned with the differentiation of the academic practice and the resulting competition over what is valued and rewarded within academic life.

A further aspect of the literature on universities and academia and particularly in relation to the RAE implies a 'top down' imposition of policy and cultural change (Halsey, 1992; Harley and Lowe, 1998). Following Trowler (1998) this study allows more space for analysis of the active part played by academics in constructing their environment amidst multiple structuring contexts so that academics are not portrayed simply as passively adapting to structural contexts but actively serving to reproduce or resist such structures.

However, the use of Bourdieu's framework of analysis has not been unproblematic in this study and a number of critical issues have been raised. The most important of these is with the concept of *strategy*. Bourdieu argues that strategies which orient the practices of individuals are not wholly conscious but are more a kind of instinctive 'feel for the game' or 'following of the bent of one's habitus' (see Chapter Three). If one takes the location of an individual within a social field, however, the habitus (i.e. dispositions) and the *positioning* within the social field based on the accumulation of forms of capital may allow an understanding of the *position-taking* (in response to particular issues such as changes in research policy). But this analysis gives us a limited understanding of the intricacies of *strategies* for further accumulation of capital. These are context dependent not only on the positioning of individuals within academic and disciplinary *fields* but also the context-interaction within specific institutional locations.

For Bourdieu, *strategies* for capital accumulation within social fields are seen as only semi-conscious and are more attuned to the unconscious incorporation of the 'rules of the game'. As Mouzelis (2000) maintains, "what he is concerned with are not strategies as commonly understood, but quasi-automatic reflex reactions to the syntagmatic unfolding of social games" (Mouzelis, 2000: 751). In contrast to this, Mouzelis argues, that practices may be understood as being shaped by three types of logic. Firstly, the normative logic of my *position* (in the field), secondly, the practical logic of my *habitus* (disposition) and thirdly, the *rational-strategying* logic of the unfolding interactive situation (Mouzelis, 2000: 753). The latter implies a level of conscious strategying on the part of the individuals concerned which would for example, give a greater understanding of why an academic would choose to submit an article to a particular journal or attend one conference rather than another.

This form of analysis throws light on the institutional and disciplinary organisation of research work within university departments and the part played by the RAE in formulating the rules and strategies for success in the 'game'. However, an understanding of all three of these specific logics ensures a more complete analysis of academic practices within the context of institutional and disciplinary locations. This study concentrates on the *positioning* and *rational-strategying* of academics.

In the three-level framework provided by Grenfell and James (1998) the emphasis of this research has been on the 'second level', which investigates "the structure of relations between positions of agents who compete for the legitimate forms of

specific authority of which the field is a site” (Grenfell and James, 1998: 173).

However, more attention could be paid in future studies to the first level of analysis of the academic field vis a vis the field of power, i.e the positioning of higher education within society and the links of academics with other social fields such as government, the media and their standing generally within the social body.

Secondly, this study would have benefited from a more in-depth analysis of the habitus of academics based on their social trajectories and social background as well as their positioning within the field. In this way the academic or disciplinary habitus of the individuals studied could be linked with their ‘primary’ habitus of social origin and educational background, which would allow for a greater understanding of a stratified account of different habituses (Brubaker, 1993). This form of analysis could also be taken up in further studies.

It is possible to argue, based on the findings of this study, that the RAE has come to play a dominant role in defining the *symbolic capital* operative within the academic field both in terms of defining the basis of accumulation of *research capital* and in serving to accentuate the differentiation of research active and research non active academic staff by placing the accumulation of *research capital* as not simply a priority but a necessity for recognition within academic life.

The organisational, managerial and ideational structures (Grenfell and James, 1998) were studied at these two universities primarily at the departmental level although

this is always placed in the context of the institutional structures. Each university has a particular teaching and research mission and organises the distribution of funding to departments in different ways. At GCU, for example, the stated intention of the Vice Chancellor was for all departments to achieve the highest rating in the RAE and for all staff to be research active. At RCU, on the other hand the explicit mission was to improve the research ratings across the whole university but also to substantially support (possibly through selective funding) those departments who had achieved well in the RAE. At RCU there was a greater devolving of funds to Schools than was the case at GCU where funding decisions were taken by central administration.

An analysis of the processes of decision-making across both institutions showed a complex mixture of collegial and managerial structures. A variety of components of collegiality (Bush, 1998) was discussed and the extent to which these were in evidence across both institutions and with each department. These included collective decision-making by all, equality in the division of teaching and research duties and a 'feeling' of common aims and values expressed by members of staff. The perception of staff, particularly in the Sociology and English departments, was that collegiality best described the relations between staff in the department. This view was expressed despite evidence that decision-making particularly in relation to research policy and RAE assessment was not 'open to all'. Equally the division of labour in departments, particularly in the Biology departments, was not equal in terms of teaching, research and administrative duties. In the Sociology and English

departments there was a more explicit ordering of duties to ensure an even spread of teaching and administration. However, those staff not involved in research were given extra teaching and administrative duties and many who were involved in research were 'buying themselves out' of teaching once awarded Fellowships and other forms of research funding.

The 'collective fiction' of collegiality is an important one for the identity of academic departments and one that most academics struggle to maintain. However, there are signs of managerial organisation within universities and this was in evidence both at GCU and RCU. The role of the head of department in the Biology department at GCU is one example of the increasing authority structures. Similarly the management of activities throughout the institutions and the extent of *strategic* planning within institutions and departments including the monitoring of staff activities, particularly in relation to research, are all evidence of increasing managerialism (Parker and Jary, 1994) and managerial surveillance (Harley and Lowe, 1998). The concept of managerialism is significantly under theorised with respect to higher education institutions. Although more recent work on 'new managerialism' (Deem, 2000) provides a more thorough investigation of the complex managerial structures within universities.

What can be concluded, in light of the present study, is that the diverse institutional, disciplinary cultures located within departments are important for understanding the specific collegial or managerial organisations within universities and that it is not

possible to identify global trends towards managerialism. On the whole a form of 'restricted collegial' organisation was found within the departments at GCU and RCU. What is significant is the way that academics resist or at least reinterpret forms of managerial intent. Thus, for example, mentoring and monitoring of research activities of staff within departments is interpreted as support for those activities. This was especially the case in the English department at GCU although not the English department at RCU. Institutional cultures, therefore, can supersede disciplinary ones.

Becher and Kogan (1992) argue, however, that the discipline or at least the disciplinary sub-areas within university departments can influence their organisation such that 'hard' knowledge forms are more likely to give rise to more hierarchized and formal organisation whereas 'soft' knowledge forms encourage relations that are less formal and hierarchized. Although this insight may in practice prove some worth, this epistemological reductionism (Trowler, 1998) ignores the influence of institutional organisation and issues such as department size and in the case of the present study, policy changes such as the RAE. However, for the departments in this study, there are examples that would bear out the Becher and Kogan's (1992) insights. This would include the Sociology department at GCU where autonomy and informal organisational relationships predominate and the disciplinary sub-areas for a significant proportion of the department may be described as 'soft'. To say that both co-exist, however, does not determine

causality. And furthermore, each department hosts a number of disciplinary sub-areas that are a mix of 'hard' and 'soft' knowledge forms.

Disciplinary structures are, however, important for understanding the cultures within departments and the disciplinary *habitus* of academics within them. The variety of disciplinary organisation is almost infinite and the examples of Biology, Sociology and English provided in this study show the extent of this differentiation. Within Biology, for example, levels of funding and the existence of research groups determine to a large extent the division of this discipline. This includes, externally funded, 'hard' research to be found in areas such as Microbiology and research that needs little or no funding and is carried out by individuals such as in the areas of Ecology. Similar kinds of divisions were found in Sociology such as that between scholarship/research, theory/empirical research, integrative/specialist and the pure/applied distinction. In English there were divisions around creative writing/research and cultural studies/English literature.

The divisions identified by Becher (1989) of pure/applied and soft/hard knowledge forms were found as organising features of these disciplines. However, as Becher (1989) himself acknowledges, these should be treated as a continuum along which sub-areas of research should be placed, rather than as strict dichotomies of either/or. Furthermore, possible continuum should not be distilled into these four divisions (including convergent/divergent and rural/urban) but extended to include others, which are unique to particular disciplines such as those identified within this study.



Finally, the hierarchy of value placed on these divisions by Becher (1989) cannot be taken as fixed. There were many examples from interviewees in this study who maintained that applied and/or empirical research, where it could lead to external funding was highly valued within their departments. Professor McGowan in the Sociology department at RCU and Dr Lester in the Biology department at GCU were particularly emphatic on this point.

For this reason, therefore, an understanding of academic departments and the principles of evaluation of academic work cannot be reduced to disciplinary (essentialism) or institutional structures and forces but must be as an intersection of both. Within these multiple forms of differentiation are the individual academics who struggle to incorporate and resist them. These struggles cannot be seen as passive responses to and inculcation of, policy changes such as the RAE. These must be analysed through the already complex divisions and forms of evaluations that exist within institutions and within disciplines.

The significance of the RAE has been looked at in three ways in this thesis. Firstly, in terms of the organisational, managerial and ideational structures of the university departments. Secondly, in terms of the *symbolic value* of academic and research work within these departments and the extent to which forms of *academic capital* and *research capital* are constructed and valued. Thirdly, in terms of the *positioning* and *strategies* of academics and their *habitus*.

The institutional *strategies* in response to the RAE have been considerable. Research policy within both of these institutions has changed dramatically in response to the RAE such that explicit direction has been given to departments and Schools on how they should organise RAE strategies and plans for submission. Although in the case of the Biology department at GCU this form of direction can and was resisted by the head of department. These institutions have instigated explicit research policies stated in many of the policy documents and expressed to me in detail by the Vice Chancellors and Pro Vice Chancellors.

Departmental *strategies* have also been developed for research in all of the departments studied. And it was often expressed that this kind of organisation of research such as the formation of research committees had not existed in the past (for example, in Sociology at RCU). Some of the positive influences of the RAE reported in the literature such as the invigoration and rejuvenation of research activity within departments (McNay, 1997a) was found in the departments studied. So too were the negative influences such as the increased monitoring of research activities and pressure placed on staff to do research (Harley and Lowe, 1998).

These policies and *strategies*, however, are highly dependent on the history, size and research areas that exist within the department as well as the aspirations the department has for a particular research rating. The international/national distinction is important, as is consequently the number of staff submitted under to the RAE as research active. Heads of department and others responsible for RAE

submissions, therefore, developed strategies to maximise the grading by submitting a certain number of staff and calculating the likelihood of their status being defined as national or international. An example of this was given from the head of Biology at GCU.

These *strategies* refer primarily to the presentation and submission of the RAE document, however, they did have practical outcomes and consequences for those members of staff who were not submitted. Particularly for those who believed themselves to be active researchers, the effects were extremely negative both in terms of their self-esteem and the way in which they were perceived thereafter within the department. The RAE submissions were also mediated through perceptions of disciplinary divisions where, for example, one head of department only wanted to submit those members of staff working in research areas that he believed would be highly valued by the RAE panel (see Chapter Five).

The *strategies* of individual members of staff are also constructed within these multiple institutional and disciplinary structuring conditions and are based on the positions that individuals hold in the *field* and their possession of different forms of capital. The key forms of capital identified within academic life are *academic capital* and *research capital*. Bourdieu (1988) argued that academics are positioned within the *field* depending on their accumulation of each form of capital. Many of the academics interviewed were employed as teachers and researchers within their

department and to some extent had accumulated both *academic* and *research* capital.

However a struggle in the academic battlefield was apparent based on the differential value placed on *academic* and *research* capital. Those members of staff who were situated toward the 'research pole' (Bourdieu, 1988) were accorded significantly higher esteem than those heavily involved in teaching and administration. Moreover, in most of the departments the struggle also raged over what could be defined as research and who was defined as research active. Many examples were discussed in each department of staff who disputed the categories and judgements made on the value of their research work. The successful attributes of research, what is here being called *research capital* are not so easily defined. For each of the departments the forms of symbolic capital (material, social and cultural) were outlined and the struggle of academics to accumulate this capital was discussed. These included research funding (material), publications (symbolic) and collaboration (social).

Explicit criteria for success in research were outlined by each of the RAE panels for Biology, Sociology and English. However, the precise meaning and weighting of these criteria is not clear. Many of these corresponded to the perception of criteria for research success such as external funding and publications. The strategies of academics, however, are subject not only to the criteria given by the RAE but also the multiple principles of evaluation within their institution, external funding body,

discipline and sub-area of research. Examples were given in Biology of Dr Lester at GCU who expressed confusion over the expectations of the department (in response to RAE criteria) and those of his funding body. Likewise Professor Morrissey felt drawn between his concern to publish in journals highly regarded for RAE purposes and to publish in edited collections and other outlets whereby his established position in his research area would be more widely received.

Despite the intense pressures placed on staff to produce research in response to RAE criteria, they do not simply respond accordingly. Drawing on the multiple principles of evaluations within academic life they struggle to usurp the overwhelming pressure to research. Position-taking on this is related to the position held by the academic concerned and the possession of already accumulated forms of *academic* or *research* capital.

For those members of staff seeking to begin or to further their academic career, meeting RAE criteria is a significant *strategy*. For those staff whose research career is more consolidated they are concerned with RAE criteria but also other forms of evaluation such as research councils and other external funding bodies. Academic staff with little research capital, attempt either to accumulate some through publication or resist the pressure to research and instead argue for the corresponding value of their academic capital.

In response to changing policy measures, therefore, institutions, departments and individual academics respond in a multitude of ways. The practice of academics to either support or subvert the current principles of evaluation is dependent on their position within the *field*. However, the attempt to subvert the dominant principle of evaluation, i.e. research (Bourdieu, 1988) can result in exclusion from the field.

Where academics have resisted pressures to research this has often led to their exclusion from the *field of play*. This exclusion occurs firstly, through the moral pressure from peers who feel that a non researcher is ‘letting the side down’ and secondly, through feelings of lack of self-worth by the non researcher or in the words of one English academic “If you are not working on something major (in research) you feel distinctly minor” (Mr Savery, English, GCU).

Sidaway (1998) described a change in the ‘structure of feeling’ of academic staff working in UK universities during the 1990s. There is a sense in which what motivates and organises the practice and experience of academics is changing. In light of the findings of this thesis, it could be argued that the ‘rules of the game’ in academic life are shifting and changing such that many individuals can no longer rely on their sense of how to play the game, particularly when new rules and principles of evaluation for success in academic life are being dominated by the research imperative. Struggles to resist this imperative may already be over.

## APPENDIX 1

### The 1992 Research Assessment Exercise

There were 72 subject areas listed and they were assessed by a panel of approximately 5 to 8 members and 2 or 3 subject specialists. Panel members were selected from nominations made by academic subject associations, professional bodies, learned societies and other organisations. The names of the panel members were made public. The panel judged each UOA along the five point rating scale that had been developed in the 1989 selectivity exercise. A member of staff from the council would be in attendance at all meetings within each panel in order to ensure that the correct procedures were followed as set out by the council.

Research was more precisely defined as follows;

‘Research’ for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce and industry, as well as the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship<sup>i</sup>; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances and artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and analysis of materials, components and processes, e.g. for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. (Higher Education Funding Council, Guidance on Submission, 1996)

A precise definition was given for the five rating scales relating to national and international excellence. The definitions for the 5 point rating scale related to research quality with 5 indicating an attainable level of (%) international excellence in some sub-areas of activity and national excellence in virtually all others; (4) national excellence in virtually all sub-areas with international excellence in some; (3) national excellence in a majority of sub-areas or international excellence in some; (2) national excellence in at least half the sub-areas; (1) national excellence in none or virtually none of the sub-areas.

Submissions for UOAs were to include only those members of staff who were research active and each of these individuals listed their publications and other forms of public output to be judged by the panel. The research profile, including priorities and plans, of the whole unit was also taken into consideration.

The 1992 RAE introduced the principle of formula funding and also set out the types of funding which would be available. The majority of funds (90%) would be distributed under Quality Research (QR) and would be allocated on a formula funding basis, which would take into account the rating given by the assessment panel, number of research active staff (RAS), number of research assistants (RA) and research students (RS) and money donated from charities (C). Thus, for 1992 the formula was:

$$\text{Quanta} = (Q-1) \times 1.0(\text{RAS}) \times 0.1(\text{RA}) \times 0.15(\text{RS}) \times 0.2C.$$

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **The 1992 Research Assessment Exercise**

A smaller proportion of funds would also be made available to enable UOAs with research potential to develop their research activity (DevR) and to encourage research activity relating to basic research (GR). This money was won on the basis of successful bidding.

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<sup>i</sup> Scholarship embraces a spectrum of activities including the development of teaching material; the latter is excluded from the RAE.



## APPENDIX 2

### Total QR Funds allocated before and after the 1996 RAE (HEFCE, June/July, 1997)

<b>1996-7</b>	<b>1992 Research Rating</b>			
	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Funds	32,721,988	117,322,336	197,445,193	252,510,482
Volume	5,898	10,325	12,060	11,522
Unit of Resource	5,548	11,363	16,372	21,916
<b>% of Total Funds</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>42%</b>

<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1996 Research Rating</b>			
	<b>3b and 3a</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5*</b>
Funds	98,429,172	172,250,216	206,878,553	156,442,057
Volume	12,527	12,507	10,196	6,510
Unit of Resource	14, 845	13,772	20,289	24,033
<b>% of Total Funds</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>25%</b>

### APPENDIX 3

#### Numbers and Status of staff interviewed in each discipline at each university

<b>Golden County University</b>				
	Professors	Researchers	Senior Lecturers	Lecturers
Biology	3	3	5	5
Sociology	2		2	1
English	3		3	4
<b>Royal County University</b>				
	Professors	Researchers	Senior Lecturers	Lecturers
Biology	3	1	9	5
Sociology	1		1	4
English	3		4	1

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Interview Schedule for Lecturers In Biology Departments**

#### **Personal research profile**

1. Research interests
2. How much time spent on research/teaching/administration
3. Time spent on research in library, office, fieldwork, laboratory
4. Collaboration with staff within department/institution
5. Collaboration with staff from other institutions
6. Publications: books, journal articles (which journals), newspapers and others
7. Attendance at conferences
8. Membership of committees/organisations e.g.
9. Other positions within university e.g. Head of Department, Field Chair
10. Involvement in institutional committees e.g. Research, Teaching

#### **Departmental RAE rating in 1996**

1. Organisation of department. Departmental meetings etc....
2. Departmental research meetings? If yes how often and who is involved.
3. Submission for 1996. Who was involved? How was it organised? Planning?
4. Submission for 2000. Strategy?

#### **Research Assessment Exercise**

1. Personal view on the RAE?
2. Do you know who were panel members for Biology?
3. What are the main criteria that you think are being judged within the RAE?

#### **Research activity in Biology**

1. Stratification of institutions?
2. Stratification of Biology departments?
3. Publications? Journals? Publishers?

## APPENDIX 5

### Sociological Habitus of Researcher

Before attempting to elaborate on my own sociological habitus, I would like to admit to some reluctance. Who is to say that one is any more able to socio-analyse oneself than to psychoanalyse oneself? The point raised in Chapter Three about the difficulties of identifying reflective and unreflective moments is a pertinent one. To what extent is one able to uncover one's sociological unconscious? Is the point simply to sketch one's social trajectory and position oneself in the current academic field? This is what I shall attempt to do and apologise in advance for any disguised attempts to relate any 'egological' narratives.

I come from a working class background. Educated at a comprehensive school. I was influenced by strong 'Labour Party' values of my grandmother. I attended studied psychology and sociology in my first degree. From the beginning of my higher education I was interested in disciplinary divisions and the different approaches to the production of knowledge within these two disciplines (having experienced conflict between the two when writing an interdisciplinary dissertation). From my time at Glasgow doing my B.A. I developed a strong interest in Social Theory and Research Methods and also the Sociology of Culture. I then went on to study an MA in the Sociology of Contemporary Culture. Here I was introduced to the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

I then got a job as a Research Assistant working on a project concerned with the educational implication of increasing student numbers in higher education. Once again this involved an interdisciplinary approach to the study of higher education policy. I am now currently writing this PhD in the area of sociology and the study of higher education. This developed out of an interest in how academic work was changing (based on my research into teaching methods and interviews I had conducted). I witnessed a lot of disillusionment about what I was happening within higher education and I was interested in studying what it means to be an 'academic'. My PhD supervisor has had a big influence on my thinking about research methodology and refocusing on sociological concerns. At Warwick I was also re-introduced to an intense 'sociological' environment compared with working within a more interdisciplinary environment.

This gives a small insight into my intellectual background. But what is perhaps more important for a reflexive analysis is to also highlight my current 'objective' position within the academic and sociology fields.

## APPENDIX 6

### Biological Sciences Panel

#### 14 Biological Sciences

##### Assessment Criteria

1. The submissions will be judged on the following measures:
  - The quality of publications.
  - Evidence of esteem by external funders, particularly those employing the most rigorous peer-reviewed processes, as indicated by research income.
  - The extent of research activity as indicated by the number of research assistants, research students and research studentships.
  - Evidence of the vitality of the unit of assessment, the quality of its research, the distinction of its individual members, and its prospects for continuing development.
4. informed views about the relative standing of journals.
5. Conferences organised by bodies of standing, such as the professional institutions, will be rated more highly than local conferences organised by a department. International conferences will be rated more highly than national ones.
6. Other forms of output will be assessed on the same principles, greater weight generally being given to items that have been subject to rigorous judgement by peers.
7. The Panel will take full note of research relevant to users, however all research will be judged on its merits whether as basic or applied science.

##### Publications and Other Forms of Output

2. The panel will read selectively from the works cited. The medium of publications will be scrutinised for all works. For journal articles the Panel will generally attach greater weight to articles published in the journals with the most rigorous editorial and refereeing policies.
3. The Panel will not collectively rank journals, but individual panel members will be guided by their

##### External Research Income

7. External research income will be used as a measure of peer judgement or standing related to previous achievements, or promise. Greater weighting will be given to those forms of support known to be the result of more rigorous peer-reviewed assessment processes.

##### Research Assistants, Research Students and Research Studentships

8. The number of research assistants will supplement the information derived from external research income.
9. The numbers of studentships, the numbers of FTE students registered for a research degree, and the numbers of higher degrees awarded will be regarded

## APPENDIX 6

### Biological Sciences Panel

as indicators of quality. Greater weight will be given to doctorates than to masters degrees.

#### **Research Environment and Plans, General Observations and Additional Information**

10. The Panel regards the information contained in sections RA5 and RA6 as an important indicator of the vitality of the department, the quality of its research, the distinction of its individual members and its prospects for continuing development.
11. It is not expected that the information in these sections will be exhaustive, but it should illustrate the highlights of the period concerned. The Panel will require answers to the following questions:
- What were the most important scientific advances made by the members of the department during the assessment period? By whom were they made?
  - Which individuals hold externally funded competitive research fellowships.
  - How have individuals demonstrated their national or international eminence? Who has been invited to give plenary or symposium talks at which major national or international conferences? (individuals should be identified). Who has been a member of which major national

or international committees? Who has been editor of which major national or international journals? Who has been given which medals, honours, awards or Fellowships of prestigious organisations?

- What evidence is there of past or future changes in finance, organisation or staffing designed to enhance research? (vague declarations of intent will not be sufficient).
  - What evidence is there of co-operative research between disciplines, between institutions and between countries?
12. The Panel would be grateful if the following additional information could be included on Form RA6.
- If the department has received, during the assessment period, more than £100k from any private charity and the total sum of money should be given.
  - Where the department has received, during the assessment period, more than £100k from any source outside of its own institution for the purpose of construction or refurbishment of buildings, the source(s) and sum(s) involved should be given. It should also be stated whether the sum(s) are included in the statement of external research income (RA4), and under what heading.

## APPENDIX 7

### Status of Staff interviewed in Biology at GCU

<b>Golden County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Professor Meggitt	(Ex) HOD	HOD 1990-1997	Yes
Professor McEwen	Professor	1964	Yes
Professor Mulligan	Research Professor	1995	Yes
Dr Waterman	Reader	1983	Yes
Dr Merrygold	Senior Lecturer	1967	No
Dr Martin	Senior Lecturer	1974	No
Dr Eccles	Senior Lecturer	1969	No
Dr Dray	Senior Lecturer		Yes
Dr Revell	Senior Lecturer	1968	No
Dr Stanton	Lecturer	1989	Yes
Dr Sinclair	Lecturer	1965	No
Dr Robinson	Lecturer	1972	Yes
Dr Malone	Lecturer	1988	Yes
Dr Galloway	Lecturer	1993	Yes
Dr Newby	Research Fellow	1994	Yes
Dr Lester	Research Fellow	1984	Yes

## APPENDIX 8

### Status of Staff Interviewed in Biology at RCU

<b>Royal County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Professor Laing	HOD		Yes
Professor Garrison	Professor	1979	Yes
Professor Warner	Professor	1978	Yes
Dr Niven	Principal Lecturer	1989	Yes
Dr Castello	Principal Lecturer	1972	No
Dr Lockwood	Principal Lecturer	1987	Yes
Dr Richards	Senior Lecturer	1995	Yes
Dr Battersby	Senior Lecturer		Yes
Dr Kirby	Senior Lecturer	1992	Yes
Dr Summers	Senior Lecturer	1989	Yes
Dr Lewis	Senior Lecturer		Yes
Dr Davies	Senior Lecturer		No
Dr Forster	Lecturer		No
Dr Francis	Lecturer		No
Dr Conway	Lecturer		No
Dr Jennings	Lecturer		No
Dr Freeman	Lecturer	1994	Yes
Dr Morris	Research Fellow	1987	Yes



## APPENDIX 9

### Sociology Panel

#### 42 Sociology

##### Assessment Criteria

1. The quality of submissions on the Panel will be predominantly judged on the basis of the following four measure listed here in broad order of importance:

- The quality of publications.
- Evidence of the vitality of the research culture.
- The extent of postgraduate research activity.
- Evidence of esteem as indicated by external funding.

##### Publications

2. Primary attention will be given to the quality of publications. All submissions will be read by all members of the panel; but because of the size of the discipline it will not be possible for all publications to be read by all members of the Panel. The Panel will therefore read selectively and publications will be reviewed by panel members with relevant expertise. Most highly valued will be those works that contain significant or innovative research (whether theoretical or substantive). The Panel will also take note of the media within which items appear. Such media will be broadly ranked in the following order:
  - Authored books.

Publication outlets with good quality controls will be highly regarded; in-house publishers will be less so. Note that authorship here or elsewhere in this document does not imply 'sole' authorship.

- Academic journal articles.

The greatest weight will be attached to articles containing innovative work in journals with rigorous editorial and refereeing procedures. The Panel will if necessary and where possible, examine the rigour of those procedures, the composition of the editorial board, the rate of acceptance and rejection, and any other information, in order to determine the journal's relative standing. Panel members will be expected to assess the relative worth of journals in their sub-area of expertise, bearing in mind that new journals may have developed which are more noteworthy than those long-established. Book reviews do not count as a research relevant activity - although certain review articles may do so.

- Edited books or scholarly writings.

Publication outlets with good quality controls will be highly regarded; in-house publishers will be less so. Some assessment will be made of the contribution of the editor(s) to the overall research presented in the book.

- Chapters in edited books

Some consideration will be paid to the quality controls of the publication outlet

## APPENDIX 9

### Sociology Panel

and the academic reputation of the editor(s).

- Other

These include the editing of a journal or a book series, the publication of departmental working papers, articles in practitioner journals, items in non-print media, papers published in conference proceedings and so on. Those items involving peer judgement will rate more highly than those that do not.

#### Research Culture

3. The panel will evaluate the extent to which a strong research culture has been established and is being further developed throughout the department. The Panel recognises that such a culture may be expressed in different ways. In general it will be impressed both by the existence of formal structures and mechanisms through which research is supported; and by the more informal groups and networks in which new areas of research in particular are developed. Some attention will be paid to the degree to which the research plans are indicated in the 1992 RAE have been realised.

4. In order to assess 'international excellence' the Panel will be concerned to identify the various international activities and

connections of each department, especially where they result from competitive and peer review procedures.

5. The Panel will also be concerned to identify the degree to which the activities of the department have promoted the discipline and raised its profile amongst other disciplines and developed interdisciplinary research, where appropriate. Dissemination of research in the popular media may also be considered.
6. The Panel will consider how much and to what degree ongoing relationships with user communities have been successfully established; and the degree to which new audiences have been generated by the work of the department.

#### Postgraduate Research Activity

7. The Panel will be looking for evidence of a lively research culture. To that end the Panel will consider four indicators relating to postgraduate students: the number and FTEs of research students registered in the department (excluding those on partially taught Masters courses) the number of research degrees awarded in recent years; the number of studentships awarded by the Research Councils and other bodies involving open competition (eg CASE studentships); and any evidence of publications and other outputs from these research degrees.

#### Research Income

8. The Panel will be looking for evidence of a dynamic research culture. To that end

## **APPENDIX 9**

### **Sociology Panel**

the Panel will consider external research income as a measure of peer judgement relating to previous achievements or future promise. Because of the rigour of the assessment exercised by the Research Councils, income from this source will be given a higher weighting than income from other sources. Where charities are known to have similarly rigorous criteria, income from them will also be weighted more highly than from the remaining public, private or voluntary sectors.

9. The Panel will take into account the number and spread of grants across the department.

## APPENDIX 10

### Status of Staff Interviewed in Sociology Departments

<b>Golden County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Professor Davenport	Head of Department		Yes
Professor Morrissey	Professor	1995	Yes
Dr Leighton	Senior Lecturer		Yes
Dr Abrams	Senior Lecturer		Yes
Mr Robertson	Lecturer	1972	No
<b>Royal County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Professor McGowan	Professor		Yes
Dr Nicholas	Deputy Head of School		Yes
Dr Jenson	Lecturer		N/A
Dr Casey	Lecturer	1983	No
Ms Chandler	Lecturer	1992	No
Mr Taylor	Lecturer	1977	No

## APPENDIX 11

### English Language and Literature Panel

#### 50 English Language and Literature

##### Assessment Criteria

##### Publications (RA2)

1. The Panel will primarily base its assessment of submissions on its professionally informed judgement of the quality, not quantity, of cited publications and other forms of public output (RA2). The Panel will take a broad view of English studies.
2. The Panel will read selectively from the works cited. It will take some account of the medium of dissemination as an indicator of quality for all cited works, including those read, and will in general attach greatest weight to books and articles published in academic journals. The panel recognises that there may be some types of research which are not typically disseminated through the normal media for the discipline and will take account of this. Creative writing will be considered in so far as it represents original investigation which enhances knowledge and understanding. Work in performance arts must be both accessible, for instance in audio or video form, and assessable. Where the Panel asks to see such material, it may also ask for this to be accompanied where appropriate by a brief supporting statement highlighting its research content and significance. Published materials relating to

teaching are admissible if they can be shown to embody research.

3. In assessing the quality of cited publications the Panel will judge the degree of impact (that is the extent to which general understanding is increased) which that work has had, or, in the case of recently published work, is likely to have, on a national or international level. The Panel will not publish a list of approved publishers and journals, but the relative standing of publishers and journals may be taken into account in the evaluation of particular submissions.
4. In the assessment of publications, media will generally be ranked in the following order (although there will be exceptions in individual cases):
  - Books (including scholarly editions, collections of source material and creative writing).
  - Academic journal articles and chapters in books.

The Panel will attach greatest weight to articles published in academic journals with rigorous editorial policies. It recognises that it is appropriate for some types of research (for example, particular specialisms and work which is highly innovative) to be published in less prominent journals. In considering chapters in books, Panel members will pay attention to the research contribution of the book as a whole.

- Conference contributions.

In order to be considered, conference contributions must already be in the public domain. They will be assessed by applying principles similar to those used to judge articles in journals.

## APPENDIX 11

### English Language and Literature Panel

- Collections of essays.

Editors of collections of essays will be given due recognition. Editorships of journals and series may be entered on form RA6. The Panel will not regard membership of editorial boards as being a research-equivalent activity.

- Review articles.

These will be assessed by methods similar to those for articles in journals. It should be noted that the Panel will determine for itself, on the basis of content as well as length, whether or not a particular submission qualifies as a review article, and that the naming of a submission as a review article does not in itself constitute sufficient grounds for consideration under this heading.

- All other works.

Departmental working papers, 'occasional' papers and other short works, among them reviews (other than review articles and including reviews of creative writing), encyclopaedia entries and contributions to readers' guides, will be given appropriate attention.

5. The Panel accepts that there are other media in which work may be published. All work submitted must be publicly available and in a form accessible by the Panel. The above list represents the forms in which the majority of work in the English language and

literature is traditionally published. The Panel will only be able to decide how to evaluate other media, including computer software and electronic publications, when it has had the opportunity to view submissions.

6. Whatever the number of works submitted by an individual researcher, the quality of work cited will be the main consideration and each case will be looked at on its own merits. The Panel will take into account reasons why the numbers of works cited might be less than four. It recognises that young or recently recruited staff may not have had time to produce four research publications and that researchers engaged on major research projects may not have published four items in the research assessment period. In all cases, the number of cited publications will be evaluated in the context of the department's overall research culture. However, where a department returns as research active staff with no discernible research output and no convincing explanation for this, it will be duly reflected in the overall rating awarded.

#### Quantitative Information

7. The assessment of the quality of publications will be tested against quantitative information (RA1, RA3a, RA3b and RA4) and an assessment of research organisation and future plans (RA5) and general observations (RA6). The numbers of higher degrees awarded and the number of studentships awarded will be regarded as indicators of quality, with the number of higher degrees, and doctorates in particular, rated more highly than studentships.

## APPENDIX 11

### English Language and Literature Panel

8. The Panel will expect there to be a balance between the number of research active staff and number of research students in relatively large departments. As research students tend to gravitate towards larger departments, those submissions composed of relatively few staff, which display a relatively high ratio of research students to staff, will receive credit.
9. External research income will be used as a measure of peer judgement of standing related to individual researchers' previous achievements, or promise. Because of the known rigour of assessment exercised by the British Academy, income from this source and other sources which are parallel to or associated with it will be given higher weighting than that from other sources. Apart from this, all income sources will be given the same weight.

attention to the movement of staff in sustaining research and its implications for vitality in research strength. Individual institutions who wish to draw attention to this should do so on RA5 or RA6.
11. The Panel will take into account future research plans submitted in the 1992 Research Assessment Exercise, where available.

#### Research Plans (RA5) and General Observations (RA6)

10. The Panel will look for clear evidence of a research culture. Well-defined objectives will be viewed as more impressive than descriptions of intent. Where statements are made about publications or research activities, they should be easily verifiable. The Panel will be concerned to identify in particular evidence of vitality and the potential to develop and support research in the future. The Panel will pay due

## APPENDIX 12

### Status of Staff Interviewed in the English Departments

<b>Golden County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Professor Hadfield	Head of Department	1988	Yes
Professor Pearson	Professor	1966	Yes
Professor Rosewall	Professor	1987	Yes
Dr Ballard	Deputy Head		Yes
Mr Savery	Senior Lecturer	1975	Yes
Mr Edmunds	Senior Lecturer	1973	Yes
Mrs Jeffries	Lecturer	1964	Yes
Mr Wright	Lecturer	1993	?
Dr Honner	Lecturer	1993	No
Dr Green	Lecturer	1995	N/A
<b>Royal County University</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time at Institution</b>	<b>Inclusion in RAE</b>
Dr Groves	Principal Lecturer	1979	Yes
Mr Booth	Senior Lecturer	1975	No
Mr Sawyer	Senior Lecturer	1975	No
Mr Bond	Senior Lecturer	1971	No
Dr Millen	Lecturer	1995	No



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